

**Inspiring Migration to the Caliphate: *Hijrah* in ISIS's  
Online Magazines *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah***

Joonas Haverinen  
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Faculty of Theology  
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| Faculty<br>Faculty of Theology   |                              |                       |
| Author<br>Joonas Haverinen   |                              |                       |
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| <p>Abstract</p> <p>The violent radical religious group ISIS declared a caliphate in July 2014. The group urged Muslims to make <i>hijrah</i> (migrate), to regions that it controlled. Tens of thousands of Muslims followed the call to migrate and joined ISIS as foreign fighters. Foreign fighters may pose a security threat in the West upon return to their home countries as the conflict in the Middle East resides.</p> <p>Among key mediums for propagating the message of migration to Muslims in the West were ISIS's English-language online magazines <i>Dabiq</i> and <i>Rumiyah</i>, published 2014–2016 and 2016–2017 respectively. This thesis dives into the meaning and ideology of the message, which urged readers of <i>Dabiq</i> and <i>Rumiyah</i> to migrate to the Islamic State, as well as the persuasive techniques ISIS used in the propaganda to underline this call. Moreover, the thesis aims to track change in the ways that ISIS's online magazines <i>Dabiq</i> and <i>Rumiyah</i> urged Muslims to migrate. This thesis tests a hypothesis that ISIS's changing situation from an expanding to a diminishing phase on the ground in the years after 2014 changed the way in which the message of <i>hijrah</i> was propagated between the magazines <i>Dabiq</i> and <i>Rumiyah</i>. The research questions are: How is the propaganda concerning <i>hijrah</i> constructed in ISIS's propaganda magazines <i>Dabiq</i> and <i>Rumiyah</i>? How did the propagated message about migration to the lands of ISIS in <i>Dabiq</i> and <i>Rumiyah</i> magazines change between the years 2014–2017? And if the message changed over time, why did this happen?</p> <p>The data for this thesis consists of 15 issues of <i>Dabiq</i>-magazine published between July 2014 to July 2016 and 13 issues of <i>Rumiyah</i>-magazine published from September 2016 to September 2017. The research method for analyzing the magazines is close reading and the theoretical background is propaganda research.</p> <p>The research finds that eight main categories were used to propagate messages on <i>hijrah</i> throughout the magazines: (1) calls to <i>hijrah</i>, (2) significance and legitimacy of <i>hijrah</i>, (3) promises of benefits resulting from <i>hijrah</i>, (4) imposing of threats for not performing <i>hijrah</i>, (5) cases of exemplary behavior regarding <i>hijrah</i>, (6) women's role in the context of <i>hijrah</i>, (7) alternatives to and variations of <i>hijrah</i>, and (8) <i>hijrah</i> as atonement for one's sins.</p> <p>Furthermore, the results showed that propaganda concerning <i>hijrah</i> did change – not only between the two magazines but also within them. <i>Dabiq</i>-magazine began showing signs of a loosening understanding of <i>hijrah</i> in the latter half of the fifteen issues of the magazine. The initially strictly set paradigm for the obligation of <i>hijrah</i> began to bend. <i>Rumiyah</i> continued to develop the message on <i>hijrah</i> as well. This subsequent magazine presented the intention for performing <i>hijrah</i> as sufficient for being rewarded for the action. It also encouraged into fighting wherever one was located and included the aspect of stealing or destroying non-believers' property as a means of partaking in ISIS's efforts against its enemies.</p> <p>ISIS demonstrated what the combined use of modern technology and propaganda can achieve. Based on the results in this thesis, a future study could, for example, attempt to uncover the reasons why messages on <i>hijrah</i> resonated in so many people in the West. Understanding the reasons why calls to <i>hijrah</i> resonated in the readership of propaganda magazines and supporters of ISIS is a crucial step in countering the foreign fighter phenomenon in the future.</p> |                              |                       |
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# 1. INTRODUCTION

Therefore, rush O Muslims to your state. Yes, it is your state. Rush, because Syria is not for the Syrians, and Iraq is not for the Iraqis.<sup>1</sup>

This excerpt from a speech by the leader of ISIS, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, reflects one of the core messages that the violent radical Islamist group propagated through its West-oriented English-language online magazines in the years 2014–2017. The propaganda encouraged Muslims around the world to *rush* or migrate to the areas controlled by ISIS. This thesis dives into the meaning and ideology of the message, which urged readers to *rush* to the state, as well as the persuasive techniques ISIS used in the propaganda to underline this call. Moreover, the thesis aims to track change in the ways that ISIS's online magazines *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah* urged Muslims to migrate. Identifying themes that spur from the texts of the two magazines and comparing them with each other aims to reveal development in the propagated message concerning migration. The thesis demonstrates how violent radical Islamist propaganda works and how a radical religious group may bend religious terminology to fit its own ideology and purposes.

Research on the subject of religious extremist propaganda around the concept of migration – or *hijrah* in Arabic – is important in Western society. Propaganda is a factor affecting the flow of foreign fighters to conflict areas in the Middle East. During the post-Arab Spring conflicts thousands left their home countries or countries of residence in Europe to join the fight in Syria or Iraq. Some estimates put the number of foreign fighters that travelled to Syria between 2011 and 2015 as high as 25,000.<sup>2</sup> From those that left member states of the European Union, around 30% had also returned back from fighting up until 2016.<sup>3</sup> The number of returnees is expected to grow as the conflict resides in Syria and Iraq. Returning foreign fighters may pose a security threat in their home countries since there is a risk of their reengagement in violent activity upon return.<sup>4</sup> This thesis aims to shed some light on the reasons why so many migrated to join ISIS in the first place. The approach for contributing to the discussion surrounding the foreign fighter phenomenon is to look at the propagandistic messaging, which aimed at spurring Muslims to migrate to conflict areas. ISIS used the concept of *hijrah* in the online magazines *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah* to urge its supporters to migrate to the lands controlled by the group.

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<sup>1</sup> Dabiq 1, 11.

<sup>2</sup> UNOCT 2017, 7.

<sup>3</sup> ICCT 2016, 3.

<sup>4</sup> Cragin 2017, 292–294.

## 1.1. Key Concepts and Data

What was and is ISIS? The organization known as Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) or later Islamic State (IS) began as a part of al-Qaeda, which was a global jihadist movement peaking in power in the 1990s. Whereas al-Qaeda was a social movement lacking borders and a state, ISIS was a new wave of jihadism that gained control of large areas of land in Iraq and Syria. ISIS's rise to the forefront of global jihadism and to the center of attention among Middle-Eastern and global powers was a result of its military gust in 2013 and 2014.<sup>5</sup> The group had an effective media faction, which published English-language propaganda. This thesis focuses on the English-language magazines, called *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah*, published 2014–2016 and 2016–2017 respectively.

In this thesis the terms ISIS and Islamic State are used interchangeably. Sometimes the organization is also referred to as Caliphate, since this is a term used by the group itself. A caliphate refers to a politico-military leadership of the Muslim community by succession from Prophet Muhammad. It is a form of governing, which aims to enforce law, expand the dominion of Islam and unify the Muslim community.<sup>6</sup> The intention is not to endorse or take a stand theologically on the legitimacy of the declared caliphate. Referring to the Islamic State's character as caliphate simplifies the reading experience and may sometimes help in understanding the viewpoint of a person that holds ISIS as a legitimate caliphate. The abbreviation sometimes used in academia and journalism, which comes from ISIS's Arabic language name, is Daesh. In the context of this thesis the name Daesh does not bring any added value so it does not get used. The name Daesh may only serve to confuse with the identification of the organization that already has plenty of names to go by.

For the purpose of this study, it is important to understand a key term, which is at the center of most of the primary sources' analysis – *hijrah*. This term in its simplest definition means 'migration' or 'withdrawal' in Arabic. Most commonly in Arabic language it is used in its historical definition to refer to the migration of Prophet Muhammad and his followers from Mecca to Medina in the year 622 C.E.<sup>7</sup> The Islamic *hijri* calendar is founded on the year of the *hijrah* of the Prophet, thus starting the counting of years from the Gregorian calendar's year 622 C.E. The publication dates for *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah* magazines are presented in the *Hijri* calendar format in the magazines themselves for example. In the thesis the Gregorian system is used throughout. In the magazines *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah*, the term *hijrah* refers to

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<sup>5</sup> Gerges 2016, 1–4.

<sup>6</sup> The Oxford Dictionary of Islam 2003a.

<sup>7</sup> The Oxford Dictionary of Islam 2003b.

migration of Muslims to the Islamic State and at times it also refers to the historical migration of Prophet Muhammad.

The term *hijrah* is defined simply with its dictionary definition at this stage. This is due to the fact that the whole of this thesis looks into the meanings and ideology that ISIS loaded on the term via its propaganda in *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah* magazines. According to the *Oxford Dictionary of Islam*, in addition to the meanings of migration or withdrawal, *hijrah* can be considered to symbolize the willingness of a Muslim to endure hardship, because of faith and steadfastness in hope when facing persecution.<sup>8</sup> ISIS, though, used the term *hijrah* in its propaganda to fit its own purposes. The aim of the propaganda was to affect the readership's thinking and spur them into action.

The data for this thesis, the magazines *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah*, was downloaded in PDF-format from a website called *jihadology.net*. Another website, where the magazines are available for download is *clarionproject.com*. These websites collect jihadist materials for academic purposes. *Jihadology.net* is a personal archiving project of international jihadist materials by academic Aaron Y. Zelin. The website does not endorse the materials posted online.<sup>9</sup> Zelin is a Richard Borow Fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy and completed his Ph.D. in King's College London. His website *jihadology.net* is widely cited and acclaimed.<sup>10</sup> This goes to show that the primary data for this thesis was downloaded from a trustworthy and objective source.

While the majority of ISIS's media output was in Arabic, the group produced and published media releases in other languages as well. The two magazines *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah* represented the flagship in the organization's English language releases. Al-Hayat Media Centre, which was the English-language material producing branch of ISIS's Ministry of Media, produced the publications.<sup>11</sup> In total there were 15 issues of *Dabiq*<sup>12</sup> published from July 2014 to July 2016 and 13 issues of *Rumiyah*<sup>13</sup> published subsequently from September 2016 to September 2017.

The purpose of *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah* was to spread the ideology of the extremist organization. They were after all propaganda outlets. The intention was to affect the readership and endorse the political and religious views held by ISIS. A study by Haroro J. Ingram established that the reason for *Dabiq*'s existence was to persuade the target audience

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<sup>8</sup> The Oxford Dictionary of Islam 2003b.

<sup>9</sup> <https://jihadology.net/about/about-me/>.

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/experts/view/aaron-y-zelin>.

<sup>11</sup> Wignell et al. 2017, 2.

<sup>12</sup> <http://jihadology.net/category/dabiq-magazine/>.

<sup>13</sup> <http://jihadology.net/category/rome-magazine/>.

to support ISIS. The readership should either travel to territories held by ISIS or undertake attacks domestically.<sup>14</sup>

## 1.2. Research Aim

This thesis looks into the propaganda of ISIS. More specifically, the aim is to analyze the concept of *hijrah* in the English-language propaganda magazines *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah*. By comparing the messages about the term *hijrah* between the two magazines, the thesis aims to reveal differences surrounding the use of the term. In other words, the thesis looks at how the persuasion of the readers to perform *hijrah* changed over time. The research questions this thesis seeks to answer are:

1. How is the propaganda concerning *hijrah* constructed in ISIS's propaganda magazines *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah*?
2. How did the propagated message about migration to the lands of ISIS in *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah* magazines change between the years 2014–2017?
3. If the message changed over time, why did this happen?

The primary aim of this thesis is to reveal how the message on *hijrah* was constructed in the online magazines *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah*. However, the thesis also aims to find out if there were differences in how *hijrah* was presented in the various issues of the two magazines. On a more general level, in relation to each other, the two magazines have differences between them, which have been suggested to spring from the phase that ISIS was in at the time each of the magazines were published.<sup>15</sup> *Dabiq*-magazine's issues, which were often published irregularly, coincided with the expansion and success-oriented phase of ISIS's history. This was the time following the proclamation of a caliphate by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi in the summer of 2014. According to Bethan McKernan *Rumiyah* began to be published at a time when the organization seemed to be losing ground and struggling. The plight of ISIS was largely due to losses as a result of unceasing airstrikes and continued fighting with international forces on multiple fronts. McKernan argues that *Rumiyah* seems to be a secondary product compared to *Dabiq*: "*Rumiyah* lacks the 'fire and brimstone' apocalyptic narrative of *Dabiq*"<sup>16</sup>. The first release of the newer magazine seems to drive the push for

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<sup>14</sup> Ingram 2016, 2.

<sup>15</sup> Wignell et al. 2017, 2–3.

<sup>16</sup> McKernan 2016.

“lone-wolf” terrorist attacks in Western countries, which seems to support the idea of a struggling ISIS in September of 2016.<sup>17</sup>

This thesis tests a hypothesis by Peter Wignell et al. that the changing fortunes of ISIS shifted the group’s strategic focus, even though the general worldview with its values and aims persisted.<sup>18</sup> Thus, the aim of this thesis is to find out if the changing nature of ISIS’s situation affected the propagated message of *hijrah* between the magazines *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah*. Even though the propaganda in the two magazines is more similar than it is different, research has found that the changing nature of the circumstances of ISIS has had effects on the strategy that the magazines propagated. In its expansion phase, ISIS propagated messages of fighting on the battlefields. However, when airstrikes and on-the-ground losses diminished ISIS’s ability to engage in successful land war, the propaganda began focusing on instructional articles for potential terrorists acting alone.<sup>19</sup> The research aim of this thesis relates to this by analyzing the propaganda concerning *hijrah*, in other words the migration to the Caliphate that ISIS endorsed. *Hijrah* relates to the change in the propaganda suggested by Wignell et al. in that perhaps during the successful expansion-oriented phase of ISIS more foreign fighters were needed for on-the-ground battles. Propagating a message of encouragement to perform *hijrah* to the Islamic State would fit this scenario. Likewise, the changed circumstances, because of the loss of territory due to heavy bombardment and increased on-the-ground resistance against ISIS, may have changed the thematic focus surrounding the concept of *hijrah*. If the overall strategy of the group changed, perhaps the concept of *hijrah* to the Caliphate needed to be propagated differently too.

### **1.3. Previous Research on the Propaganda of ISIS**

While ISIS has been widely researched and written about from the perspective of its inception and development, the scale, reach and effectiveness of the group’s propaganda has also sparked interest to study the communications aspect. Ariel Victoria Lieberman argues that from among different terrorist organizations, ISIS has produced the most technologically advanced propaganda to date.<sup>20</sup> The group used the Internet and social media effectively to expand its propaganda’s reach from the local conflict in Syria and Iraq to one with a global scope. Videos with high production value and Hollywood-style editing with special effects as well as a move towards publishing in multiple languages in 2013–2014 extended the reach of

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<sup>17</sup> McKernan 2016.

<sup>18</sup> Wignell et al. 2017, 2.

<sup>19</sup> Wignell et al. 2017, 2–3, 18.

<sup>20</sup> Lieberman 2017, 95.



ISIS's message. In 2014 a new English-language written report, titled *Islamic State News* further contributed to the expanding reach of the propaganda. Alberto Fernandez argues that the success of the propaganda was due to the depicting of real-life events on the ground.<sup>21</sup>

While earlier jihadist groups used mainly video to spread their message, ISIS utilized multiple platforms and ways to disseminate their propaganda. Lieberman coined the development of radical Islamist propaganda as the three generations in the evolution of jihadist propaganda. First there was the generation to which Osama bin Laden belonged. The common approach was to film a lengthy video with a single static camera and have the message broadcasted on a television network. The second generation utilized YouTube and Facebook. Anwar al-Awlaki serves as a prime example of this step in the evolution of the jihadist propaganda – he uploaded videos to YouTube and had a following on Facebook. Al-Awlaki was also involved in the production of al-Qaeda's English-language propaganda magazine *Inspire*. ISIS, which represents the third generation, used the widest range of communications technology up to date. The heavy use of Twitter to spread the ideology as well as videos with gripping high-end production increased the reach and effectiveness of the propaganda. In addition, the use of multiple social media platforms including encrypted messaging applications like WhatsApp, Kik and Telegram hampered the ability of governments to intercept the spread of the propaganda.<sup>22</sup>

The messaging strategy employed by ISIS has been extremely effective due to its three-layered nature, argues Haroro Ingram. First, there are the central media offices, which publish to an international audience. These central media centres are al-Hayat, al-Furqan, al-Itisam and Ajnad. Al-Hayat Media Centre targeted Western audiences with its mainly English-language propaganda and published videos as well as the magazines *Islamic State News*, *Dabiq*, and *Rumiyah*.<sup>23</sup> Al-Furqan Media produced video and published statements by ISIS leaders. Al-Itisam focused on content in Arabic that was similar in style to the content of Al-Hayat. The Ajnad Foundation produced *nasheeds*, a type of hymn or chant with ideologically loaded lyrics, and audio recordings of the Quran.<sup>24</sup> The second level were the regional information offices, which focus on regional issues and utilize local platforms for reaching out with their message. This included signs on the street, radio and public gatherings. Third, and perhaps one of the most important elements for the spreading of the official media output was the large online support base. Their role was spreading the message and reposting content

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<sup>21</sup> Fernandez 2015, 1–10.

<sup>22</sup> Lieberman 2017, 103–104.

<sup>23</sup> Fernandez 2015, 9; Wignell et al. 2017, 2.

<sup>24</sup> Ingram 2015, 734, 748.

on different platforms online.<sup>25</sup> All in all, these different aspects explain some of the effectiveness and reach of ISIS's propaganda.

In its West-directed propaganda ISIS targeted mainly youth and young adults. Dylan Gerstel argued that the main audience was individuals between the ages of 16 and 25 with little knowledge about Islam and a small sense of purpose or identity in the society they lived in.<sup>26</sup> With recruitment as one of the main goals of the propaganda, ISIS saw success in this aspect with its refined media machinery. According to Logan Macnair and Richard Frank, the global reach and visibility of the propaganda resulted in over 20,000 foreign fighters to leave their home countries in 2015 to join ISIS. 20% of these came from countries in the West.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, Macnair and Frank discovered in their sentiment analysis of ISIS's English-language propaganda that four narrative themes arose as key element in the propagandistic messaging. These themes were (1) the narrative of the fury and strength of ISIS, (2) the humiliated enemy, (3) ISIS's religious righteousness, and (4) the continual victory of ISIS. Even though the discoveries speak about the appeal of ISIS's communication to its target audience, Macnair and Frank point out that, on its own, exposure to these messages cannot explain a person's radicalization. The process of becoming radicalized is more complex and involves socio-political and psychological aspects, which should be taken into account as well.<sup>28</sup> According to Lieberman, risk factors for an individual to become radicalized and potentially get involved with violent extremism are multiple. They include factors such as being marginalized and frustrated with one's socio-economic situation, identifying with perceived victims in a conflict, and expecting a reward from engaging in terrorism.<sup>29</sup>

Ian Pelletier et al. argued that ISIS used specific tactics when crafting their message so that it would most effectively resonate within their target audience. The group utilized the religion of Islam and *Sharia* (Islamic Law) in order to advance their message. ISIS used historical primacy to support its own message when the message was in line with mainstream Islamic Law. When the message was in conflict with mainstream Islamic Law the contradictions would be concealed or Islamic Law would be reinterpreted.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Ingram 2015, 734–735.

<sup>26</sup> Gerstel 2017, 2.

<sup>27</sup> Macnair & Frank 2018, 1–3.

<sup>28</sup> Macnair & Frank 2018, 12–16.

<sup>29</sup> Lieberman 2017, 100.

<sup>30</sup> Pelletier et al. 2016, 894.

### **1.4. Propaganda Research as a Theoretical Framework**

Propaganda research is a large field of study. From this thesis' research problem's perspective though, the relevant aspects of propaganda research are the rhetorical and persuasive techniques that propaganda may employ. However, first it is most helpful to define what exactly is propaganda.

In its simplest and most neutral sense, propaganda is defined as disseminating or promoting of certain ideas. However, the use of the term to describe the disseminating of ideas, which are not seen as neutral, like religious views, has given the term a derogatory association. Propaganda is understood as something negative, which may entail lying, deceit, distortion or manipulation. Garth Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell present that propaganda is a conscious act by the propagandist to exert power. In their view the aim of propaganda is to channel forward an ideology with an intention of affecting thinking and acting of the audience.<sup>31</sup>

Propaganda has been studied to a large extent in liberal democratic societies especially in relation to the mass media. Big corporations that own media houses or news outlets may give their own corporate spin on varying topics depending on how the message may benefit the company. A classic in this field is the Herman-Chomsky Propaganda Model (PM). The PM connects ideological and communicative power with economic, political and social power. The Herman-Chomsky model mainly looks at media behavior in a democracy. The main argument is that ownership, size and profit orientation influence media behavior by encouraging a right-wing bias.<sup>32</sup> This type of propaganda analysis, however, is not directly applicable to the propaganda of a radical religious group. Even though ISIS's propaganda concerns ideological, social and political power, the driving factor behind the propagandistic communication is not economical.

Jarol B. Manheim presents a more political perspective on propaganda in his take on Information and Influence Campaigns (IIC). Manheim labels a broad range of strategic political communication as IIC, which includes propaganda as well. IIC is defined as a strategic use of communication to influence individual, organizational, and governmental decision-making, which is based on knowledge of the tendencies of individuals and groups.<sup>33</sup> Manheim's perspective on propaganda acknowledges the intention of the communication – to influence decision-making. This relates to the topic of this thesis, as the propaganda of ISIS

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<sup>31</sup> Jowett & O'Donnell 2015, 2–4.

<sup>32</sup> Klaehn 2009, 43–44.

<sup>33</sup> Manheim 2011, ix–x.

concerning *hijrah* attempts to affect the readership's behavior by persuading them to migrate to the Islamic State.

Marshall Soules distinguishes persuasion from propaganda by arguing that propaganda is "consciously misleading or exploits beliefs, values and attitudes for the propagandist's benefit"<sup>34</sup>. The former, persuasion, can be seen as a milder version of affecting a person's thoughts or behavior. According to Soules, persuasion does not directly tell the reader how to act or think, but rather activates individual thinking in the audience. Even though the definition of propaganda does not necessarily require it, Soules also makes a connection between propaganda and conflict. During the 1900s propaganda was employed as a tool during war by totalitarian governments to influence people. New technology, including telegraph, photography, radio and film were equipped to communicate the propagandists' message to a wide audience.<sup>35</sup>

Propaganda can also be defined as manipulative. It is part of a process of a propagandist's use of power through coercive, deceptive or incentivizing communication. Vian Bakir et al. consider communication propaganda if it aims to manipulate. Organized Persuasive Communication (OPC), as Bakir et al. refer to all organized persuasion activities from advertising to propaganda, is essential to the use of power, but when it involves deception, incentivization or coercion it can be considered manipulative. Non-manipulative OPC on the other hand is a consensual form of persuasion.<sup>36</sup> ISIS's propaganda concerning *hijrah* in the group's English language magazines utilizes techniques of incentivization, deception and coercion. Thus ISIS's propaganda is non-consensual or manipulative by nature.

### **1.5. The Rise of ISIS**

To understand the origins of ISIS, a brief look into the historical context is required. The pinnacle moment of declaring a caliphate in 2014 was preceded by more than a decade of events that are part of the formation and development of the extremist group. After the 9/11 attacks in 2001, the government of the United States decided to invade Iraq in 2003. The US government held the radical Islamist group al-Qaeda responsible for the 9/11 attacks and this served as one of the reasons for the invasion of Iraq. It was believed by those arguing for the US case for invading Iraq that Saddam Hussein was linked with al-Qaeda and that Hussein possessed weapons of mass destruction (WMD). In the end neither of these claims could be proven to be true as the invaders did not find evidence of WMDs and the Hussein regime was

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<sup>34</sup> Soules 2015, 4.

<sup>35</sup> Soules 2015, 4–5.

<sup>36</sup> Bakir et al. 2018, 1–2.

in fact largely suspicious of religious extremist groups such as al-Qaeda.<sup>37</sup> Even though al-Qaeda was barely present in the country at the time of the invasion, the chaos ensued by the war gave the group a fertile ground for gaining support in Iraq.<sup>38</sup>

In his pre-invasion speech at the United Nations Security Council in February 2003, US secretary of state Colin Powell presented the link between Hussein's regime and al-Qaeda. He claimed Abu Musab Zarqawi headed al-Qaeda's terrorist network in Iraq and was the link between al-Qaeda and the Hussein regime.<sup>39</sup> Subsequently the previously virtually unknown Zarqawi was brought to the attention of the world powers and became a prominent figure and role model for future jihadists.<sup>40</sup> This is shown by the fact that his ideas and speeches were still referred to in ISIS's propaganda magazines *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah* even nearly a decade after his death in a US airstrike in Iraq in 2006.<sup>41</sup>

The formation of ISI in October 2006 (or Islamic State in Iraq)<sup>42</sup> was preceded by the conditions made possible by turmoil resulting from the war and its aftermath in Iraq. The governing body, Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), established by the United States for the democratization and de-Baathification of Iraq's government led to sectarian conflicts between the Sunnis and the Shias of Iraq in 2006 and 2007. In addition, Iraq's military forces had effectively been eradicated by CPA's decision so the fight against US-led coalition forces had largely become one of insurgency.<sup>43</sup> This was much like Saddam Hussein had suspected early on in 2003, when he urged the Iraqi people with Qur'anic and jihadist rhetoric to rise against the American occupiers.<sup>44</sup> ISI's rising popularity fed from the sectarian conflict, which united many of Iraq's Sunni tribes under a shared cause against the American occupiers, the Iraqi government and Iraq's minorities like Yazidis and Christians, but also Shia Muslims, whom ISI and later ISIS called *rafidah* (rejectors<sup>45</sup>).<sup>46</sup>

In 2010 and 2011 revolutions that began in Arab countries and subsequently destabilized Syria provided ISI with the possibility of expansion into Syria. President Bashar al-Assad, who was part of the Alawite Shia minority of Syria sought to divide his opposition and thus exacerbated the sectarian conflicts in the country. This opened an opportunity for the

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<sup>37</sup> Gerges 2016, 50–51.

<sup>38</sup> Oosterveld & Bloem 2017, 7–8.

<sup>39</sup> Gerges 2016, 51–52.

<sup>40</sup> Weaver 2006.

<sup>41</sup> Burns 2006.

<sup>42</sup> Fernandez 2015, 3.

<sup>43</sup> Dobbins et al. 2009, xxvi.

<sup>44</sup> Atwan 2015, 37; Oosterveld & Bloem 2017, 6.

<sup>45</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica 1998.

<sup>46</sup> Oosterveld & Bloem 2017, 6; Fernandez 2015, 3.

rise of ISI, which consequently was renamed ISIS (Islamic State in Iraq and Syria) in Syria. In 2013 the group took the name ISIL (Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant).<sup>47</sup> On July 1<sup>st</sup> 2014 a recording of a speech by ISIS's leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi spread on the Internet via different social media platforms and religious extremist websites. In the recording al-Baghdadi declared a new caliphate and made himself the caliph.<sup>48</sup> The first issue of *Dabiq*, titled *The Return of the Khilafah*, was published a few days later on July 5<sup>th</sup> 2014.<sup>49</sup>

### 1.6. The Method and Process of Analyzing *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah*

Close reading was chosen as the method for the analysis of the primary data in this thesis, which were magazines *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah*. Analyzing the message on *hijrah* presented in the two magazines required looking into the texts and extracting the meanings around the term and its ideology. Searching for the occurrences of the term and then closely reading the surrounding text best accomplished this.

In a linear approach to the analysis of primary data, the analysis develops in stages. First, the data is gathered and read. Then it is described and categorized. After this the categories are joined together and explained (see figure 1).<sup>50</sup>

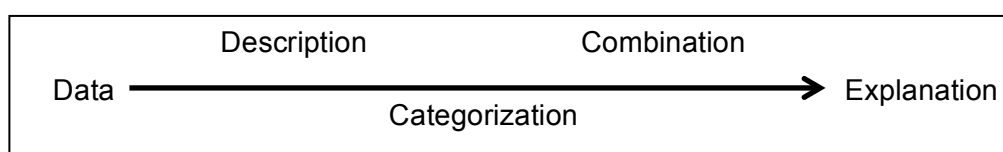


Figure 1. The linear development of analysis.<sup>51</sup>

This was exactly the process behind the building up of the analysis in this thesis. First the magazines were chosen as the primary data to be researched. Then the magazines were read through and all mentions of *hijrah* were marked in the places they occurred in. The texts surrounding *hijrah* were then read again in closer detail, while they were also simultaneously described in first developments of analysis text. Next the accumulated and chronological self-produced text about the uses of the term in the magazines was categorized according to eight themes that stood out from the description stage. These were:

1. Calling to *hijrah*
2. Explanations of the significance and legitimacy of *hijrah*

<sup>47</sup> Oosterveld & Bloem 2017, 7.

<sup>48</sup> Atwan 2015, 8.

<sup>49</sup> *Dabiq* 1.

<sup>50</sup> Hirsjärvi et al. 2003, 209.

<sup>51</sup> Hirsjärvi et al. 2003, 209.

3. Promises of benefits resulting from *hijrah*
4. Threats for non-compliance with the propagated ideology of *hijrah*
5. Proper behavior concerning *hijrah* by exemplary individuals
6. The role of women in relation to *hijrah*
7. Alternatives to *hijrah*
8. *Hijrah* as atonement for one's sins

The analysis text was then restructured from a chronological order to a thematic one through the categorization of the text. Next the thematic descriptions were combined to form an analysis that comprehensively reflected the use of the term *hijrah* in the two magazines. The magazines were analyzed separately so that possible differences or developments in the approach to *hijrah* by ISIS between the two magazines could stand out. Lastly, the findings from the two magazines separately were combined and analyzed side by side in order to reveal similarities and differences in the propagated message on *hijrah*. This was achieved by coding the findings for both magazines from the eight categories mentioned above (see Appendix 1).

The qualitative approach to the research in this thesis meant that the ethical side of the researcher's perspective needed to be considered throughout the process. As a Christian white male living in a Western democracy believing in human rights, the researcher's perspective was often in conflict with the ideas propagated in the primary data. However, this thesis aimed to stay away from ethical evaluations or judgments of the ideology or actions perpetrated in the sources. Instead, the research focused on sustaining an objective approach and inspecting the relevant material through the lens of the research questions.

In the initial stages of the research for this thesis some word frequency calculations were made concerning the relevant terminology regarding the research topic. The hope was that this quantitative aspect could give some direction for the research. The qualitative data analysis program Atlas.ti was used to calculate word frequency for terms that the research topic suggested could reveal differences between the two magazines. At first, the frequencies for terms, such as *hijrah*, Islamic, state, *khilafah* (caliphate), jihad, kill, and attack were extracted. However, due to the refinement of the focus of this thesis' topic towards comparing the message on *hijrah* between the two magazines, only *hijrah*'s word frequency is relevant. In addition, the term *hijrah* is more self explanatory in the different contexts it can appear in when compared to a term such as *kill*, for example. The term *kill* could be used in several ways in the magazines' texts: "kill the enemies" or "the enemies have killed many" for

example. This is why it is problematic to assign significance to other terms apart from *hijrah*. It should be noted too, that the term *hijrah* was used in the magazines in its Arabic form. It is written using the Latin alphabet and in the way it is phonetically pronounced, like in this thesis.

So that this stage of the research could be replicated and tested, here is a description of how the process was completed. The method of obtaining the word frequency calculation went as follows. First the PDF-versions of all 15 issues of *Dabiq* and 13 issues of *Rumiyah* were imported into Atlas.ti. Then, the Word Cruncher tool was used to reveal word occurrences from all the issues combined for both magazines. This resulted in one total number for each magazine. The Word Cruncher tool also gave the percentages that the word represented out of all the words in the magazines' issues. The table below shows the results.

| Word          | <i>Dabiq</i> issues 1–15 |                | <i>Rumiyah</i> issues 1–13 |                |
|---------------|--------------------------|----------------|----------------------------|----------------|
|               | Word count               | % Of all words | Word count                 | % Of all words |
| <i>Hijrah</i> | 288                      | 0,136          | 124                        | 0,085          |

Table 1. Word frequency calculations for *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah* magazines for the term *hijrah* using Atlas.ti-program.

The results of the word frequency calculation cannot be given any more value than what the numbers simply show. Looking deeper into the meaning of the word frequencies would require quantitative analysis methods and that could be a whole other thesis on its own. For the purposes of this thesis' research problem, it sufficed, however, to note that something has changed between the magazines. *Hijrah* was mentioned a total of 288 times in 15 issues of *Dabiq*. This represented 0,136 percent of all the words in the 15 issues of the magazine. As for *Rumiyah*, the term *hijrah* was mentioned only 124 times in the 13 issues of the magazine. This represented 0,085 percent of all the words in the 13 issues of the magazine. The percentages show a decrease in word frequency for *hijrah* between the two magazines. The decrease is not great, but it is a change. This pushed the interest forward to research the term *hijrah* in the context of the two magazines. Had something changed in the flagship English-language propaganda magazines' take on *hijrah*? If there were changes, what were they?



## 2. ANALYZING *DABIQ*

*Hijrah* was an important topic in *Dabiq*-magazine. Starting from the first issues of the new magazine, ISIS established to the readers what it was that it expected from its supporters. *Dabiq*'s 15 issues, published from July 2014 to July 2016, included 288 mentions of *hijrah*. *Hijrah* represented 0,136% of all the words in all issues of *Dabiq*. However, out of the 15 issues, only the fifth issue had no mention of *hijrah*. Issues six and four mentioned *hijrah* once and twice respectively. This shows that the weight given for the theme in *Dabiq* magazine varied with time. The analysis in this chapter centers on the themes that rose from how *hijrah* was presented. The main themes, which also serve as the sub-headings to this chapter are (1) calls to *hijrah*, (2) significance and legitimacy of *hijrah*, (3) promises of benefits resulting from *hijrah*, (4) imposing of threats for not performing *hijrah*, (5) cases of exemplary behavior, (6) women's role in the context of *hijrah*, and (7) alternatives to and variations of *hijrah*.

### 2.1. Calls to Perform *Hijrah*

*Dabiq*-magazine called on the readership of the online magazine to migrate to the lands of the Islamic State. These were mainly calls that directly urged the reader to leave their home country in the West and make their way to the lands of the Islamic State. From the beginning, the performing of *hijrah* was framed as an obligation for all Muslims.

In a section of the first issue of *Dabiq* magazine, called *Breaking News*, a call to *hijrah* is presented to the reader. This is done in relation to the news of the established Islamic State, the newly declared Caliphate. Here the theme of *hijrah* is taken up from a citation from the leader of the self-declared Caliphate, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, who is also referred to as *Amirul Mu'uminin*, meaning commander of the faithful.<sup>52</sup> The quotation first and foremost calls on Muslims to rush to the Islamic State, but it also brings to the forefront a feeling of shared ownership of the Islamic State for all Muslims:

Amirul-Mu'minin said: "Therefore, rush O Muslims to your state. Yes, it is your state. Rush, because Syria is not for the Syrians, and Iraq is not for the Iraqis."<sup>53</sup>

In the following part of al-Baghdadi's quotation, the idea of the Caliphate being a shared entity for all the Muslims is further emphasized. This part also introduces the idea of every Muslim's obligation to migrate to the lands controlled by ISIS:

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<sup>52</sup> The Oxford Dictionary of Islam 2003c.

<sup>53</sup> *Dabiq* 1, 11.

The State is a state for all Muslims. The land is for the Muslims, all the Muslims. O Muslims everywhere, whoever is capable of performing hijrah (emigration) to the Islamic State, then let him do so, because hijrah to the land of Islam is obligatory.<sup>54</sup>

The call to *hijrah* has an encouraging tone here. *Hijrah* is presented as an obligation, but it is also stated that those who are capable of performing it should do so. What defines the capability of an individual to migrate is not explained. Even though performing *hijrah* is set out to be a duty of every capable Muslim, it seems to have been thought of as a necessary addition to this call to especially invite particular talents. Again, the writers achieve this by citing a speech by al-Baghdadi:

We make a special call to the scholars, fuqaha' (experts in Islamic jurisprudence), and callers, especially the judges, as well as people with military, administrative, and service expertise, and medical doctors and engineers of all different specializations and fields.<sup>55</sup>

This call to *hijrah* directed at the mentioned talents suggests that ISIS wanted to recruit certain types of people. The group may have had a distinct need for these types of professionals. The kinds of jobs listed in the call bring to mind the building up of a state. ISIS seems to have wanted to enhance its state-building efforts by making a special call to specific professionals to migrate.

In the second issue of *Dabiq*, the foreword of the magazine clarifies the obligations that ISIS expects from all Muslims and the readers of the magazine. The writer considers the perspective of the reader in a Western country by stating: "Many readers are probably asking about their obligations towards the Khilāfah right now."<sup>56</sup> *Hijrah* is then presented as the greatest priority:

The first priority is to perform hijrah from wherever you are to the Islamic State, from dārul-kufr to dārul-Islām. Rush to perform it as Mūsā ('alayhis-salām) rushed to his Lord, saying, {And I hastened to You, my Lord, that You be pleased} [Tāhā: 84]. Rush to the shade of the Islamic State with your parents, siblings, spouses, and children.<sup>57</sup>

This text incorporates the family level into the call to migrate. The call is not only on the individual level but extends to the reader's relatives as well. The message is strong, since the performing of *hijrah* is presented as the first priority in a Muslim's obligations towards the Islamic State.

In the tenth issue of *Dabiq*, the month of Ramadan is used as a tool to mobilize the reader to perform *hijrah*: "do not allow another Ramadān after this one to pass you by except

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<sup>54</sup> Dabiq 1, 11.

<sup>55</sup> Dabiq 1, 11.

<sup>56</sup> Dabiq 2, 3.

<sup>57</sup> Dabiq 2, 3.

that you have made hijrah from the lands of kufr to the lands of the Islamic State!”<sup>58</sup> This call to *hijrah* urges the reader to take action. It places a timeframe (before the next Ramadan) to the call. Ramadan acts as a kind of deadline for performing *hijrah*.

An article titled *Do They not Then Reflect On the Qur'an* in the thirteenth issue of *Dabiq* encourages the readers into performing *hijrah* as an individual choice. It dissuades the reader from basing the choice of migrating on what others are doing. This seems like a tactic that could speak to those who are socially excluded or thinking of migrating to Iraq or Syria but hesitating because no one else around them is doing it.

Allah reminds His Messenger and the believers that each individual is only responsible for himself. He should not look around and base his decision to make hijrah and wage jihād for the cause of Allah on what other people are doing.<sup>59</sup>

An exception is revealed here. It is a different take on the message that ISIS propagated in *Dabiq* magazine in its call for Muslims to make *hijrah*. In other calls to migrate, the performing of *hijrah* is presented as a duty and an obligation. Those types of messages suggest that there is no choice and that every Muslim should migrate. In contrast, here the approach is that there is a decision to be made by the individual: to migrate or not to migrate. The message is still one that encourages into migrating, but it seems to be acknowledged by the author that readers may choose not to migrate too.

In the fifteenth and final issue of *Dabiq* magazine, the issue of *hijrah* – in the sense of calling Muslims of the target audience to migrate to the lands of the Islamic State – gets taken up later than in most of the other issues. The first mention comes in an article titled *Words of Sincere Advice*, the name of which already suggests to the reader that the article contains some instructions or codes of conduct. The call to *hijrah* comes after an encouragement to pledge allegiance to the leader, the Caliph, and to obey his commands<sup>60</sup>:

Rush to perform hijrah (emigration) to the land of Islam, where the Shari'ah is in full application. Hijrah is a sign of both one's love for unity and his adherence to the Sunnah of Allah's Messenger. This was reiterated as a direct order from Amirul-Muminin, who said, "O Muslims everywhere, whoever is capable of performing hijrah to the Islamic State, then let him do so, because hijrah to the land of Islam is obligatory."<sup>61</sup>

This call to migrate makes use of a quotation from the leader, Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi's speech, which was also used in the first issue of *Dabiq*. The call that was presented as an obligation in the magazine's first mentions of *hijrah* gets repeated in the same way here. This

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<sup>58</sup> *Dabiq* 10, 29.

<sup>59</sup> *Dabiq* 13, 29.

<sup>60</sup> *Dabiq* 15, 27.

<sup>61</sup> *Dabiq* 15, 27.

type of call did not appear often in other issues. Other mentions of *hijrah* throughout the magazine mainly focused on promoting, persuading and legitimizing *hijrah* for the reader.

Calls to perform *hijrah* in *Dabiq*-magazine showed what it was that ISIS expected from its supporters. Muslims were directly called to rush to the Islamic State and this action was presented as an obligation. Adherents to the call were directed to Syria and Iraq. The calls extended to the entire family of the target audience of the magazine. Authoritative aspects were also incorporated in the call as Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the leader of the Caliphate, was frequently cited in the first issues. Even though migration was presented as a duty or obligation for all, it was also presented as something the individual had to choose to perform. The next sub-chapter analyzes the ways ISIS argued for the significance and legitimacy of the concept of *hijrah* in *Dabiq*.

## **2.2. Significance and Legitimacy of Hijrah**

*Dabiq*-magazine sought to explain to the reader the significance of *hijrah* to the religion of Islam. Mentions of *hijrah* throughout the magazine revealed the building of legitimacy and reasoning behind calling on Muslims to migrate to the lands controlled by the Islamic State. These parts of the *hijrah*-related texts seemed to try to show the reader that how ISIS understood *hijrah* was in correlation with the religion of Islam.

*Hijrah* is further explained in later parts in the first issue of *Dabiq* in an article called *From Hijrah to Khilafah*. This article explains that *hijrah* is an integral part of *jihad*. Other aspects of *jihad* listed after *hijrah* are “*bay’ah*, *sam’* (listening), *ta’ah* (obedience), and *i’dad* (training)...”.<sup>62</sup> In the same sentence it is revealed to the reader that these five things included in *jihad* lead to “*ribat* and *qital* (fighting), then *Khilafah* or *shahadah*.”<sup>63</sup> The main point seems to be that *hijrah* is a significant part on the road to building the Caliphate. The text also reveals that *hijrah* may also lead to *shahadah*, which means a martyr death.

One of the aspects taken up in the third issue is the idea that the migration ISIS was trying to induce to the Islamic State with its propaganda is something that is unique and has never happened before in human history. What was claimed to be unique was the arrival of people to the territories controlled by ISIS to help the establishment of and fighting for the Islamic State.<sup>64</sup> This claim attempts to make *hijrah* and the foreign fighter phenomenon seem historically special to the reader.

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<sup>62</sup> *Dabiq* 1, 35.

<sup>63</sup> *Dabiq* 1, 35.

<sup>64</sup> *Dabiq* 3, 5.

This claim of historical uniqueness in the migration of people to the Islamic State is misleading. A study by the Center for Strategic & International Studies explored historical cases of the foreign fighter phenomenon. It found that the roles and impact of foreign fighters in conflicts have evolved over the decades. Fundamental parallels have remained however. Volunteers are attracted by the sense of being obliged to defend their Muslim brothers, be it from a local aggressor committing atrocities against Muslims or a foreign invader fighting the Muslim nation.<sup>65</sup> Even though the scale in which Muslims have moved to the lands of ISIS in recent years is larger than in preceding conflicts – for example in Afghanistan in 1979, Bosnia in 1992 or Chechnya in 1994 – the involvement of foreign fighters in a violent conflict is clearly not a new phenomenon like the article in the magazine claims.<sup>66</sup>

Claiming that the emigration of people from different countries to the lands of the Islamic State is an unprecedented phenomenon may serve a purpose for ISIS's propaganda. At the very least, the text makes the phenomenon seem special to the reader. It may intrigue the reader to be a part of something that is an exceptional occurrence in human history. Here the writer has utilized a technique of deception through distortion, where the message is altered so that it supports the goal or perspective of the propagandist.<sup>67</sup> After all, what ISIS is aiming for with this message is to have an effect; it tries to affect the readership's thinking. Ultimately, the aim is to mobilize the reader and encourage them to immigrate to the lands of the Islamic State and join the ranks.

The fourth issue of *Dabiq* presented *hijrah* as a fundamental part of Islam. It is mentioned as an order from Allah and is put into context as something that in the chain of relation ultimately makes Islam prevail over the crusades that ISIS alleges take place against it:

We have a promise from Allah that this religion prevails, and by this religion what is meant is the religion described by the inspired and rightly guided khalīfah ‘Umar Ibn al-Kha āb (radi- yallāhu ‘anh) who said, “There Is no Islam except with jamā’ah, and no jamā’ah except with imārah (leadership), and no imārah except with tā’ah (obedience)” [Sunan ad-Dārimī]. The religion that Rasūlullāh (sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam) came with, as in the hadīth, “I order you with five things that Allah ordered me with: jamā’ah, sam’ (listening), tā’ah, hijrah, and jihād sabī-lillāh for indeed, whoever leaves the jamā’ah by a hand span has removed the noose of Islam from his neck unless he returns” [Sahīh: Ahmad and at-Tirmidhī].<sup>68</sup>

The quotation shows that hadith texts are also used to legitimize the viewpoint that *hijrah* is part of commandments that come from Allah. This increases the significance of the concept

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<sup>65</sup> Donnelly et al. 2017, 30.

<sup>66</sup> Donnelly et al. 2017, 3, 6, 9.

<sup>67</sup> Bakir et al. 2018, 12.

<sup>68</sup> Dabiq 4, 3.

of *hijrah* in the eyes of the reader and brings a feeling of authority to the ideology in the context that ISIS wants it to be seen in. What this does is it effectively gives *hijrah* a theological legitimacy.

*Hijrah* was also mentioned in the fourth issue of *Dabiq* simply as an attribute of the Islamic State. The point seemed to simply be to clarify what the Islamic State is: "...that it was a state of *hijrah* and *jihad*".<sup>69</sup> However, this shows that *hijrah* was considered a key element of the Islamic State's character. This emphasized the importance of *hijrah*, since the whole of the Islamic State is boiled down to two main components: *hijrah* and *jihad*. What the reader is left with is an understanding that *hijrah* is central to what the Islamic State is.

In the ninth issue of *Dabiq* *hijrah* is defined as an action in relation to what Allah dislikes. It is abandoning that, which Allah does not like.<sup>70</sup> This gives a new perspective to the migration to the lands of the Caliphate that has been propagated until now. The same article, a few pages later, states that *hijrah* is the first step out of many on the path to martyrdom.<sup>71</sup>

The unchanging nature of *hijrah* is brought up in the article *And Allah is the Best of Plotters* in a context, where it is put side by side with fighting disbelievers and *jihad*: "Indeed, fighting the kuffār, *hijrah*, and *jihād* will remain until the establishment of the Hour."<sup>72</sup> This context is the prophetic belief, in which 'Isa comes down to Earth and leads Muslim armies into war against the *kuffar*, the disbelievers. The quotation shows a strong emphasis on the argument that the mentioned things will remain because of a divine plan. What is understood of *hijrah* from this text is that it will not change until a certain event takes place. Therefore, it is understood from this context that the message of *hijrah*, which the propaganda of ISIS tries to convey, is a legitimate one and one that holds true until 'Isa descends down to Earth. Thus, the reader should trust and obey the call to *hijrah*.

In the same article, another perspective on the unchanging nature of *hijrah* is given from a very authoritative voice. This is the voice of the Prophet Muhammad himself:

Allah's Messenger (sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam) said, "Hijrah will not cease to exist until repentance ceases to be accepted, and repentance will not cease to be accepted until the sun rises from the West" [Reported by Abū Dāwūd from Mu'āwiyah].<sup>73</sup>

This text highlights the message that the Prophet said as an authoritative figure in Islam. The unchanging nature of *hijrah* is again argued for through the religious connotation, by showing

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<sup>69</sup> Dabiq 4, 36.

<sup>70</sup> Dabiq 9, 9.

<sup>71</sup> Dabiq 9, 13.

<sup>72</sup> Dabiq 9, 53.

<sup>73</sup> Dabiq 9, 53.

that even the Prophet said this about the issue. For a Muslim, there is weight in the words of Prophet Muhammad. The choice of including words of Prophet Muhammad in the article could speak of a tactic by the author of the text to attribute the message to a credible or admired person.<sup>74</sup> This increases the effectiveness of the message. Following the idea of the phrases logically, it is understood that *hijrah* will not cease to exist until the sun will rise from the West. As the readers would know, the sun rises from the East and thus something miraculous or supernatural should happen that the sun would rise from the West. Therefore, it is understood that something miraculous is also required that the duty of *hijrah* would change.

The eleventh issue of *Dabiq* presents an exception to the definitions and explanations for the significance of *hijrah*. *Hijrah* is mentioned in a context, where it is given a metaphorical definition. In contrast to other contexts, where *hijrah* is understood as a concrete action of migrating to the lands of the Islamic State, in the article that speaks against false teachers of Islam, the act of *hijrah* is something else: “Shaykhul-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah said, ‘The comprehensive hijrah is to boycott sins and the people of sin’”<sup>75</sup>. This citation of Shaykhul-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah reveals a different approach to *hijrah*. It does not necessarily mean that ISIS would not encourage people to migrate to their lands, but it still shows that the theological term can be understood in a different way. *Hijrah* does not have to be only migration, even in the propaganda of ISIS.

The definition of *hijrah* is further qualified in the eleventh issue with the explanation that the destination of the migration should be to the *wilayat* (meaning administrative regions) of the Islamic State only.<sup>76</sup> Doing the opposite or migrating to the West is presented as a “dangerous major sin”<sup>77</sup>. This message seems to be aimed at those, who have from ISIS’s perspective understood the concept of *hijrah* wrong. Making *hijrah* in the wrong direction, meaning not to the Islamic State is presented to imply a curse by Prophet Muhammad’s tongue. The text uses religious text to showcase that it is one of seven major sins if a person returns to the desert to live as a Bedouin after already having performed *hijrah*.<sup>78</sup>

What strikes as an interesting detail is that there is no attempt to explain the juxtaposition of returning to live as a Bedouin after *hijrah* and returning to one’s homeland after *hijrah*. It seems to be assumed that the reader takes for granted that the historical context in the religious texts is directly applicable to the present day argument of not allowing a

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<sup>74</sup> Manheim 2011, 78.

<sup>75</sup> Dabiq 11, 13.

<sup>76</sup> Dabiq 11, 22.

<sup>77</sup> Dabiq 11, 22.

<sup>78</sup> Dabiq 11, 23.

reverting to the old after *hijrah* has been made. Or at least this is how the propaganda is written here; it disregards the contextual problem of the old texts and applies the concepts straight into the present day.

The fourteenth issue of *Dabiq* presents *hijrah* as something that defines a true believer. “Allah is teaching us that by performing the deeds we’ve been instructed to do – particularly the difficult ones that require a greater level of obedience and sacrifice – the Muslim lends more strength to his claim that he is a believer.”<sup>79</sup> The aim of the message seems to be to divide the support for the group and effectively propagate the message that if you really call yourself a Muslim, then you should perform the obligation of *hijrah* to the Islamic State.

To summarize, *Dabiq*-magazine presented *hijrah* as a significant and legitimate part of Islam and the Islamic State. It was described as a historically unique phenomenon, which was central to the religion of Islam and a defining characteristic of the Islamic State. The Islamic State was the required destination for *hijrah*, which was described as unchanging by nature. This was done by attaching *hijrah* to apocalyptic prophecies that entailed that *hijrah* would not cease until the end of times. Abandoning what Allah dislikes formed another property of *hijrah*. *Hijrah* was also described to define a true believer. Throughout the building up of the significance and arguments for legitimacy, religious texts of Islam were used to support ISIS’s view of *hijrah*. The next sub-chapter looks at the promises of benefits that the propaganda concerning *hijrah* employed to try to entice the reader of the magazine to migrate.

### **2.3. Promises of Benefits Resulting from Hijrah**

The magazine presented benefits for those, who accepted the call and decided to migrate to the Islamic State. These promised benefits concerned mainly the well being of oneself and one’s family. In addition, promises of rewards by Allah to those, who took on the path of performing *hijrah* were occasionally made. These promises showed that the subsequent benefits presented for performing *hijrah* could be both in the here-and-now and in the after life. In the second issue of *Dabiq*, both of these aspects of the promised benefits were presented side by side:

There are homes here for you and your families. You can be a major contributor towards the liberation of Makkah, Madīnah, and al-Quds. Would you not like to reach Judgment Day with these grand deeds in your scales.<sup>80</sup>

A new aspect compared to the first issue of *Dabiq* and its mentions of *hijrah* is that now for the first time an *incentive* for the reader is conjoined with the idea of the obligation of *hijrah*.

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<sup>79</sup> *Dabiq* 14, 19.

<sup>80</sup> *Dabiq* 2, 3.



Bakir et al. refer to this as *incentivization* in their article about Organized Persuasive Communication. This technique in propagandistic communication is a method of persuasion, where something good is promised for the target audience. This promise acts as a motivator, because the propagandist promises to provide a benefit that the readers will receive if they act accordingly.<sup>81</sup>

In this case there are three separate pieces of incentivizing content that arise from the text. First, by performing *hijrah* the readers are promised homes for themselves and their families in the lands of the Islamic State. Second, a big role in liberating Islam's meaningful cities is promised. Thirdly, the concept of Judgment Day is taken as an example, in which the motivating factor of promising a role in the liberation of Mecca, Medina and al-Quds is put into perspective. Partaking in these operations is made to seem as something that would be pleasing to Allah and therefore benefit the person in question during Judgment Day. These pieces of incentivization place weight on the act of *hijrah*. *Hijrah* becomes not only an obligation but also ultimately something that is beneficial for the responder to the call. The promised benefits are immediate (homes for yourself and your family) and long term (good deeds on your record in the eyes of Allah).

An article in *Dabiq*'s ninth issue titled *Healthcare in the Khilafah* displayed the medical expertise and healthcare field of the Islamic State. This article boasted about the number of patients that received treatment and the different types of operations that had been done. Towards the end, however, a call to action is given to the readers. It is also termed as a "wake up call" in the text itself.<sup>82</sup> It is a message to the students of medicine living in Western countries:

This should be received as a wake-up call for the many Muslim students in the lands of kufr who claim to study medicine to "benefit and support the Muslim Ummah," but then remain in those lands, chasing after worldly pleasures instead of performing *hijrah* to the Islamic State – and this despite *hijrah* being an undeniable Islamic obligation, in addition to the fact that *hijrah* was and still is relatively easy. The Islamic State offers everything that you need to live and work here, so what are you waiting for?<sup>83</sup>

It seems that this text tries to lay the obligation of *hijrah* on the Muslim students of medicine, while simultaneously trying to invite the students with the benefit that the Islamic State can offer. This places a positive incentive for them to perform the migration, which is still an obligation and requirement for every Muslim. In addition, the migration is said to be easy. In essence, the propagated message here is that there is a requirement that you should perform. It

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<sup>81</sup> Bakir et al. 2018, 13.

<sup>82</sup> *Dabiq* 9, 26.

<sup>83</sup> *Dabiq* 9, 26.

is easy to do and by doing it you not only fulfill the duty of a good Muslim but also receive the benefit of receiving everything needed for living and working in the Islamic State.

The eleventh issue of *Dabiq* features an interview with the “Delegated Leader for the Libyan Wilayat”<sup>84</sup>, Abul-Mughirah al-Qahtani. The topic of *hijrah* gets taken on on the last page of the four-page article. The reporter of *Dabiq* asks Abul-Mughirah, where fighters performing *hijrah* to the Libyan parts of the Islamic State are coming from. Abul-Mughirah answered that fighters arrive from Africa, North African countries, Egypt, the Arabian Peninsula, and occasionally from Western countries. The reporter of *Dabiq* followed up the question by asking if there are any difficulties in performing *hijrah* to Libya.<sup>85</sup> To this Abul-Mughirah had the following to say:

They should remember that despite the difficulties of hijrah, {Whoever leaves his home as a muhājir to Allah and His Messenger and then death overtakes him – his reward has already become incumbent upon Allah. And Allah is ever Forgiving and Merciful} [An-Nisā’: 100].<sup>86</sup>

This answer seems to try to convince the reader that *hijrah*, no matter the hardships on the way, is worth it. The reason that Abul-Mughirah gives is embedded in a quote from a religious text. It says that the reward for committing to leaving your home as an immigrant is already accepted by Allah. By deciding to leave one’s home, in the eyes of Allah, one is already entitled to a reward, should one die on the way. Another aspect to this is that it is implied that the hardships on the way can mean death to the person making *hijrah*. The interview still goes on about the issue of *hijrah*. The third question concerning the topic now asks Abul-Mughirah about advice for those who want to make *hijrah* into Libya. The answer is as follows:

The supporters of the religion should know, {And whoever performs hijrah for the cause of Allah will find on the earth many locations and abundance} [An-Nisā’: 100]. We call them to march forth and incite them to support us.<sup>87</sup>

Here, the advice Abul-Mughirah gives for the Muslims, who would like to perform *hijrah* to Libya is again embedded in a quote from religious text. It says that whoever migrates in the cause of Allah will find many locations and abundance. This seems to imply a message that there are many locations to which one could make *hijrah*, not just the lands of Syria for example, which is often mentioned in earlier issues of *Dabiq*. There is also a promise here of well being in the scriptural quote; the finding of abundance for those who perform *hijrah*.

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<sup>84</sup> Dabiq 11, 60

<sup>85</sup> Dabiq 11, 63.

<sup>86</sup> Dabiq 11, 63.

<sup>87</sup> Dabiq 11, 63.

When asked about advice for the Muslims, who are migrating generally or the ones migrating to Libya in particular, Abul-Mughirah said that the reason behind performing *hijrah* should be the right one. Performing *hijrah* for other reasons than Allah and his cause is not good, like Muhajir Umm Qays, who made *hijrah* to the prophet Muhammad because of a woman he wanted to marry. In the end, Abul-Mughirah says that actions are defined by their intention and comfort does not come from comfort.<sup>88</sup> This means that it is expected that those who, migrate should have the right mindset when doing it and they should not expect it to be easy. However, the idea of a resulting comfort due to the *hijrah* that is performed with the right intention is embedded in the text. The message conveyed is that enduring the difficulties of *hijrah* with the right mindset will finally result in achieving comfort.

What has become a pattern in interview sections in *Dabiq* magazine also occurs in the thirteenth issue. The leader of the Wilayah Khorasan, Shaykh Hafidh Sa'id Khan gets asked a question concerning the theme of *hijrah*. The reporter of *Dabiq* asked if the fighters are continuing to make *hijrah* to the area of Khorasan, which were the areas controlled by ISIS in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Shaykh Hafidh Sa'id Khan answers:

We, on our part, receive – with great welcome – every Muslim who makes *hijrah* to the Wilāyah, and we help him to the best of our ability with everything with which Allah has provided us by His grace.<sup>89</sup>

Firstly, the question is framed so that it is signaled to the reader that Muslims are already migrating to the Islamic State's area of Khorasan. The answer on the other hand makes *hijrah* to Khorasan even more inviting. The leader of the area effectively promises to take care of everyone, who decides to make *hijrah* to his Wilayah.

*Dabiq*-magazine presented the reader with promises of benefits, which would result from performing *hijrah*. These benefits could be immediate or short-term, but they could also be long-term. The short-term benefits that were promised included the provision of homes and everything needed for living and working in the Islamic State. On a more general level, the magazine promised comfort and abundance to those, who would perform *hijrah*. Promises of benefits that were more long-term presented the possibility of receiving glory and honor from getting to partake in meaningful battles as a result of having performed *hijrah*. Migrating to the Islamic State would also result in a reward from Allah. *Dabiq* did not include only promises of benefits, however. Threats were also employed as a technique of persuading into performing *hijrah*. The theme of threats for not complying with the call to *hijrah* is looked at next.

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<sup>88</sup> *Dabiq* 11, 63.

<sup>89</sup> *Dabiq* 13, 50.

## 2.4. Threats to Non-Compliance

Readers of *Dabiq*-magazine were urged to perform *hijrah* through the use of threats that were imposed on those, who did not adhere to the call to migrate. The presented threats consisted of harms to the individual such as general hardship in life, problems in the afterlife, losing one's family members to drugs or alcohol, and punishment by Allah. In general, it can be said that living in the West got presented in a negative light, and migrating to the Islamic State was the solution to the problem.

In the seventh issue of *Dabiq* threats to not complying with the call to *hijrah* are presented to the reader. *Hijrah* is used to qualify an individual. Someone who supports the ideology of ISIS, but does not think about performing *hijrah*, is not a true believer. By choosing to live under the authority of an earthly regime a person like this becomes a hypocrite in the eyes of ISIS.<sup>90</sup> In addition, performing *hijrah* is made into an ultimatum choice for every Muslim living in the West:

The Muslims in the West will quickly find themselves between one of two choices, they either apostatize and adopt the kufri religion propagated by Bush, Obama, Blair, Cameron, Sarkozy, and Hollande in the name of Islam so as to live amongst the kuffar without hardship, or they perform *hijrah* to the Islamic State and thereby escape persecution from the crusader governments and citizens.<sup>91</sup>

Interestingly, this brings a tone of threatening to the propaganda. Bakir et al. would categorize this as a form of deceptive coercion. The propaganda tries to manipulate fear, by introducing costs to acting or not acting in a certain way. The threat posed by the message may also be nonexistent.<sup>92</sup> In the example given here, choosing to remain under Western rule by not performing *hijrah* implies a life of hardship as well as becoming an apostate in the eyes of the Islamic State. Making *hijrah* is given as the option to stay clear of these costs or dangers resulting from the choice of not performing *hijrah*.

The foreword text of the ninth issue states that *hijrah* is an obligation. And those that are indifferent towards the obligation will face the angels of death:

As for those who continue to suffer from the disease of being indifferent towards the obligations of *hijrah*, *jihād*, and *bay'ah*, so much so that they see nothing wrong with residing amongst, and paying taxes to, the very crusaders who belittle the Sharī'ah... then let them prepare their flimsy excuses for the angels of death.<sup>93</sup>

Here it is reaffirmed that *hijrah*, along with *jihād* and pledging allegiance to the Caliphate are obligations. If a Muslim fails to adhere to these obligations a threat is implied upon them. In addition, being indifferent towards the obligations is labeled as suffering of a disease.

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<sup>90</sup> Dabiq 7, 6.

<sup>91</sup> Dabiq 7, 62.

<sup>92</sup> Bakir et al. 2018, 14.

<sup>93</sup> Dabiq 9, 4.

Implying a threat for not following the propagated message is a form of coercion. This threat is used strategically as it places a cost to the reader for not following the ideal course of action.<sup>94</sup> Another way to look at the coercion is to view it as a limitation to the choices that the reader has.<sup>95</sup> In order not to face the angels of death, the Muslim living in the West should either wage *jihad* in the country where they live and plan to make *hijrah*, or make *hijrah* and then wage *jihad* on the enemies of ISIS. Both of these options also require a *bay'ah*, a pledge of allegiance, to the Caliphate. Mirroring these choices to the idea of coercion as a limitation to the reader's choices, it becomes clear that the message here is quite clearly coercive.

An article in the twelfth issue of *Dabiq* aims at sending a message to families. The article's main goal is to tell the reader about the risks of a Muslim family living in a Western country. The issue of *hijrah* is central in this message, because it is presented as an escape from or a solution to the problems that living in the West allegedly presents. The article is written by a man by the name Abu Thabit al-Hijazi and includes the following message that al-Hijazi's mother told him about migration to Western countries:

“Every family that comes here suffers one calamity or another with respect to their children.” What she was referring to, as she went on to clarify, were the countless Muslim youth in the West who get themselves tangled into drugs, alcohol, gangs, promiscuity, and other vices and social illnesses over which any decent Muslim family would weep for its children.<sup>96</sup>

The catastrophic threats of losing one's children to such problems as drugs, alcohol, gangs and so on probably appeal to the emotions of the reader. The fear of losing your children is given backing by the personal testimony, through which the author is conveying his message. The worry of his mother is a personal narrative that gives the feeling of truthfulness and makes it easier to trust what is being said. Later on the same page the author again gives the solution to the fears mentioned before:

But even in the case of those who eventually make the decision to leave such lands and perform *hijrah* to *dārul-Islām* after Allah guides them and opens their eyes to the dangerous situation they are in, it's often too late for their family. For many, the decision to save themselves comes after they've already lost their children, some to drugs and promiscuity, and others to *kufr*, *shirk*, and even atheism. And it all begins in the schools.<sup>97</sup>

The text here adds another dimension to the call to *hijrah*, which the propaganda magazines are trying to convey. Here the idea or feeling given is that even if you decide to commit to performing *hijrah*, the action might already be too late considering your children. Losing one's children is made into a threat. The threat has a condition, which is that if one does not

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<sup>94</sup> Bakir et al 2018, 3.

<sup>95</sup> Andrews, 1972, 10.

<sup>96</sup> *Dabiq* 12, 33.

<sup>97</sup> *Dabiq* 12, 33.

perform *hijrah* early enough, the children will be lost to drugs and other immoralities. The feeling conveyed is that it is better to commit to *hijrah* earlier rather than later. The tactic of persuading to perform *hijrah* continues in the article with arguing the children's case by blaming the parents for their misfortune:

How is it then that one whom Allah has graced with the blessing of children could develop the audacity to neglect and belittle this trust that he's been burdened with by sending them to be "educated" by the enemies of Allah?!<sup>98</sup>

The blame technique is further used on the same page, when author asks rhetorical questions for the reason why the reader is residing in a non-Muslim country:

What led you to herd your family to the lands of the crusaders in the first place, and what keeps you and those residing in the lands of the apostate tawāghīt so firmly fixed in place, refusing to perform *hijrah* to the Islamic State? ...is it simply your deluded hope of attaining the Dunyā or your reluctance to sacrifice it for the purpose of *hijrah*? If the answer is the latter – and those who are honest will admit that it is – then don't expect your Lord to bless your endeavor to reside peacefully in the lands of kufr for the sake of pursuing the luxuries of this world, all the while neglecting your clear-cut duties towards your Lord and His religion. Rather, you should fear that He will punish you in this Dunyā – through your children, amongst other means – before punishing you in the Hereafter if you refuse to sincerely repent before it's too late.<sup>99</sup>

Here the blame technique has turned into a threat: Allah will not bless the people who pursue the luxuries of this world and will in fact punish those that refuse to perform the duty of *hijrah*. He will punish the people in this world and in the afterlife. These are quite big threats. And the fact that they are presented as the only truth in an authoritarian way gives *hijrah* as sense of urgency. You and your children are in danger from the worldly threats of drugs, alcohol and crime, but also from the supernatural, from the punishment of Allah. And all this is the result of not living in the way that Allah wants and choosing to live in a non-Muslim state in order to pursue a good life. Performing *hijrah* starts to look like a good option and solution, when the severity of consequences of doing otherwise is seriously considered.

In the thirteenth issue of *Dabiq*, Shaykh Hafidh Sa'id Khan, the leader of the Islamic State's Khorasan Province in Afghanistan and Pakistan changed the tone on *hijrah* in an interview from a caringly inviting one to one of threatening:

It is upon them to make *hijrah* in order to escape from the humiliation of the Dunyā and the punishment of the Hereafter, and to leave the camp of falsehood and enter the camp of truth wherein there is no falsehood.<sup>100</sup>

How this answer changed the tone, which was presented in the previous sub-chapter about promises, tells of the bi-tonal nature of the messaging on the issue of *hijrah* that ISIS is propagating through its propaganda magazine. The first tone is caretakingly inviting. In this

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<sup>98</sup> Dabiq 12, 35.

<sup>99</sup> Dabiq 12, 35.

<sup>100</sup> Dabiq 13, 50.

tone it is promised that whoever makes *hijrah* will be taken care of. Sometimes the message goes even further to say that through *hijrah* one is able to find a happy life through the possibilities and facilities offered by the Islamic State. The second tone is demandingly urging, even threatening. In this more coercive tone threats are used to motivate the reader to perform *hijrah*. Most often the threat is the punishment by Allah in the afterlife for not obeying, but at times it is also a consequence in the here-and-now, like misfortunes to one's family. In this case the threats were humiliation by the temporal world (*dunya*) and punishment in the afterlife.

*Dabiq*-magazine presented the target audience with threats for not complying with the call to perform *hijrah*. One who would not perform *hijrah* was threatened with being apostatized from the religion as a whole. Not performing *hijrah* would also entail a life of hardship. One could lose one's own children as a result of not committing to the requirement of migration to the Islamic State. Facing the angels of death and receiving punishment from Allah were also employed as threats, which could be averted by choosing to comply with the call to *hijrah* that the magazine presented. Another identifiable theme that *Dabiq* presented in relation to the concept of *hijrah* was the use of examples. Narratives of individuals, who acted in the way that ISIS wanted, were a big theme in the magazine.

## **2.5. Exemplary Behavior**

One of the most prominent themes around *hijrah* is the provision of good examples. Individuals, who have acted in the expected manner, were often presented in a frequent article series, titled *Among the Believers are Men*, but also in interviews for example. These articles told the stories and commemorated fighters of ISIS, who had often died in battle. In most of the cases the performing of *hijrah* was an integral part of the process of reaching the sought-after result of *shahadah*, or martyr death. In these cases the propaganda effectively employed the power of the example. According to Ariel Lieberman, role models can provide a source of authoritative legitimacy in the context of radicalization and violent action.<sup>101</sup>

In the seventh issues of *Dabiq*, *hijrah* is portrayed as a path to martyrdom. Martyrdom is idealized in the propaganda of ISIS. In the *Among the Believers are Men* –article series that runs through the magazines martyrdom is often the final destination of the featured people. In the seventh issue this is no exception, as the article starts with the following paragraph:

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<sup>101</sup> Lieberman 2017, 100.

When Abū Qudāmah al-Misrī embarked on the hijrah to Shām with his best friend Abū Mu’āwiyah al-Misrī in 2012, little did they expect that both, by Allah’s grace, would become shuhadā’ while fighting in the ranks of the very men who would go on to revive the Khilāfah.<sup>102</sup>

Here *hijrah* is the journey through which the men obtained an end result for themselves that the text claims they did not expect. Dying in fighting for the cause that would lead to the establishment of the Caliphate made the mentioned men martyrs – or *shuhada*. This makes a grim but sought-after outcome a possibility for those, who perform *hijrah*. *Hijrah* becomes a path through which one can join the jihadist fight and possibly obtain martyrdom in that fight.

In another *Among the Believers are Men* –article in the tenth issue of *Dabiq*, the *hijrah* of the man referred to as Abu Malik at-Tamimi is idolized. The story makes the man sound heroic:

The knight finally dismounted... the knight, the hero Abū Mālīk at-Tamīmī dismounted from the horse of jihad... and departed. He had abandoned the world, prestige, wealth, and luxury, and left in search of the path for a pristine life and the Hereafter, migrating thousands of miles in search for a jihād in which the creed of pure tawhīd as well as walā’ and barā’ is practiced.<sup>103</sup>

The action of *hijrah* comes through from this text in the description of the journey done by at-Tamimi. According to the text he travelled thousands of miles to join the *jihad* and pursuit of righteous life. The wording used in the text depicts the man as an idol and someone to look up to. He is described as a knight riding a horse of jihad. He is also referred to as a hero. The sacrifices at-Tamimi made in his choice to abandon luxury and wealth make the man seem even more revered. It would seem that the writer is trying to motivate the readership to do the same. There is also a picture of at-Tamimi on the first page of the article.<sup>104</sup> In this image, the man looks very happy and well, he is smiling. This creates the feeling that performing *hijrah* not only makes a person someone to look up to, a hero, but also leads to happiness and well-being.

On the next page another man is commemorated after being killed in an airstrike. He is referred to as Abu Umar at-Tunusi and his story involves *hijrah* too. It was described as follows:

A veteran of many years in the Islamic State, the brother first made hijrah to Iraq in 2003. He became acquainted with some of the legends of the Iraqi jihād such as Abū Mus’ab az-Zarqāwī and Abū Hamzah al-Muhājir (may Allah accept them both).<sup>105</sup>

Here, performing *hijrah* is made to seem to the reader like something that could lead to meeting legendary jihadists. In other words, this could give the impression that migrating to the lands of the Islamic State and serving on the war front could get you into the same circles

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<sup>102</sup> Dabiq 7, 46.

<sup>103</sup> Dabiq 10, 40.

<sup>104</sup> Dabiq 10, 40.

<sup>105</sup> Dabiq 10, 41.



where influential and respected fighters, such as Abu Musab az-Zarqawi or Abu Hamzah al-Muhajir acted. For young men seeking meaning into their lives, this thought might be especially interesting or appealing.

The appearance of examples of role models were not limited to only the *Among the Believers are Men* –articles though. In the tenth issue, an interview is used as a tool to showcase an individual’s good behavior. The interview tells the personal account of Abu Samir al-Urduni’s turning away from the Jawlani front and returning to the ranks of the Islamic State.<sup>106</sup> Al-Urduni’s mention of *hijrah* seems like something that is slipped into the conversation. The man turned away from the side that he was fighting with to perform a duty of *hijrah* to the side that he had decided is the right one. In the end of the interview, the closing remarks by the author reveal the purpose of the story of al-Urduni: “To conclude, we ask Allah to make this testimony something that guides those who remained in the Sahwah Coalition towards sincere repentance and to make this testimony in your scale of good deeds.”<sup>107</sup> This shows that al-Urduni is considered an example. His actions of turning away from the Jawlani front and making *hijrah* to the Islamic State are hoped to guide those who have not yet done so.

In the twelfth issue of *Dabiq* in an *Among the Believers are Men* –article, the example of Sri Lankan Abu Shurayh as-Silani is presented. In the case of as-Silani, a peculiar addition to his story of *hijrah* is added:

When the dream of khilāfah became a reality presenting the chance to perform *hijrah* to a land where the Sharī’ah of Allah and the Sunnah of His beloved Messenger would be revived and upheld, there was nothing that could hold him back from answering the call. As occurred with many others, it felt as though his entire life seemed to lead him to this moment.<sup>108</sup>

This part of the text gives the impression that Abu Shurayh was very eager to perform *hijrah*. To readers already interested in the message and purpose of ISIS, the part where it was said that Abu Shurayh felt his whole life had led him to the moment he made *hijrah*, will most likely feel encouraging. To a youth or young adult seeking purpose in life the call to *hijrah* and the consequential partaking in jihad and fighting for the well being of the *ummah* may give purpose to life. This is an effective tool for persuasion that ISIS employs decisively to convince the readers of its propaganda to realize that *hijrah* is something that they should strive to perform.

An article in the series of *Among the Believers are Men* in the thirteenth issue of *Dabiq* tells the story of a man by the name Abu Muharib al-Muhajir, better known as Jihadi John.

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<sup>106</sup> Dabiq 10, 69.

<sup>107</sup> Dabiq 10, 76.

<sup>108</sup> Dabiq 12, 57.

The use of such a well-known example and framing him as a role model seems like an effective technique to legitimize the message ISIS tried to convey about *hijrah* to its magazine's readership. Jihadi John appeared in multiple videos published by ISIS and due to the media attention he received, he most likely had a celebrity-like status among jihadists, making him an asset to the propagated message.<sup>109</sup> In the *Dabiq*-article Jihadi John's story of *hijrah* is explained in detail, which not only highlights the challenges he faced but also the value of overcoming of them. The length at which the journey of migration is explained speaks of the importance of the message propagated.<sup>110</sup>

An example of a man revered for participating in the terror attacks in Belgium in 2016 reveals an exception to the propaganda concerning *hijrah*. In the foreword to the fourteenth issue Abu Idris al-Baljiki is described to have made *hijrah* in 2013 when he "heard the cry of Muslims in Sham"<sup>111</sup>. Abu Idris al-Baljiki is described to have been wounded in a battle and to have thus started training for returning to Europe:

After healing for several months, he began to train in order to realize his dream of returning to Europe to avenge the Muslims of Iraq and Shām for the constant bombing by crusader warplanes. Upon completing his training, he traveled the long road to France to execute his operation. It was Abū Idrīs who prepared the explosives for the two raids in Paris and Brussels.<sup>112</sup>

Whereas in earlier parts of the magazine the returning to Europe was described as an unacceptable act and waging jihad in Europe only as a secondary alternative to performing *hijrah*, here Abu Idris' journey back to Europe to take the fight to the soil of the Islamic State's enemies is not condemned. Returning becomes acceptable. The describing of Abu Idris' action as a *dream* of his also makes the action seem like a good one. The fact that the propaganda's author writes that Abu Idris was dreaming of it makes it seem like it is an acceptable thing to dream of. Abu Idris also trained for the return. Who would train for something that is not good or desirable? This is an exception in the attitude towards the opposite of *hijrah* (returning to Europe) by ISIS. In earlier issues of *Dabiq*, it had seemed that the organization wanted its new fighters to firstly perform *hijrah* and under no circumstances to return. They wanted the soldiers to stay and to fight for the Islamic State. Now in the fourteenth issue of *Dabiq* Abu Idris' return to Europe, which is the opposite of *hijrah*, is written about and the terror attacks following his return are revered. It is given space in the propaganda and it is described as a heroic action.

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<sup>109</sup> Casciani 2015.

<sup>110</sup> *Dabiq* 13, 23.

<sup>111</sup> *Dabiq* 14, 7.

<sup>112</sup> *Dabiq* 14, 7.

The fifteenth issue of *Dabiq* features an interview with a jihadist fighter from Trinidad and Tobago. The man's name is Abu Sa'd at-Trinidad. He mentions *hijrah* in the context of his waging of jihad along with some other Muslim men in his home country:

One of our goals was to eventually make hijrah – when we had the ability to do so – and join the mujahidin striving to cleanse the Muslims' usurped lands of all apostate regimes, and as a result, I would keep myself up to date on all the latest news around the Muslim world and the jihad fronts. We would weigh all of our options as we awaited our opportunity for hijrah. At the same time, we knew that we couldn't just sit and dream while doing nothing, so whenever the disbelievers in Trinidad would kill or harm a Muslim, we would take revenge. We would work to accumulate money in order to buy weapons and ammo. Alhamdulillah, we were successful in many operations, and this was only by Allah's grace.<sup>113</sup>

The story of Abu Sa'd could serve as an example to the readership of the magazine. The message given here through the example of Abu Sa'd is that even if you are planning to make *hijrah*, you can still make yourself useful for the cause by attacking the disbelievers while waiting for the opportune moment to migrate to the lands of Islam. The ways in which one could be useful are the mentioned taking revenge on killed Muslims and working to accumulate money for weapons and ammo.

In the interview Abu Sa'd and his Muslim brothers are said to be the first Muslims to perform *hijrah* to the Islamic State from Trinidad and Tobago. This gets emphasized through the questions that the reporter asks Abu Sa'd.<sup>114</sup> The reason for this focus and interest in that particular fact could be to spark the interest for *hijrah* in other possible pioneers from different countries. This argument is supported by the fact that Abu Sa'd gets glorified and framed as a hero in the interview. He is given the chance to tell about his role in the Caliphate as a sniper. Next to the part, where Abu Sa'd tells about his role as a sniper and partaking in “many fierce battles against the various enemies of the Islamic State”<sup>115</sup> a picture of a sniper wearing a ghillie suit, which is a suit meant for camouflage, is attached. This automatically gives the impression that what Abu Sa'd gets to do in the ranks of the Islamic State is not only meaningful but also attractive or impressive. It is made into a role that is something to aspire to for the reader.

In an *Among the Believers Are Men* –article in the fifteenth issue of *Dabiq*, illnesses as excuses for not performing *hijrah* are taken up. The heroic examples of Abu 'Abdillah al-Canadi and his brother Abu Ibrahim al-Canadi are described here. The brothers had a blood disorder and asthma respectively, but were determined not to let these illnesses get in the way of their *hijrah*:

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<sup>113</sup> Dabiq 15, 66.

<sup>114</sup> Dabiq 15, 67–68.

<sup>115</sup> Dabiq 15, 67.

He had a blood disorder, which made it difficult for him to take part in any activities that could lead to strenuous or stressful circumstances. However, just as his brother had refused to let his asthma get in the way of fighting for the cause of Allah, so too did Abu ‘Abdillah refuse to let his condition prevent him from doing the same. They had both struggled to perform hijrah despite their conditions, and were not about to give up after reaching the point they had come to.<sup>116</sup>

The story of the two brothers shows how *hijrah* is portrayed as part of a notion of unity and comradery in a high degree. What the two went through together is written about in a manner that seems very positive:

The two had been very close throughout their lives and had now achieved their goal together. They had abandoned Christianity and embraced Islam together, learned together, made hijrah together, fought together, and were killed together. May Allah raise them together on the Day of Judgment and enter them into the highest levels of Paradise.<sup>117</sup>

The author wishes that Allah would raise the brothers to the highest levels of paradise. This signals a deep respect to the brothers’ actions and their devotion to the cause of the Islamic State. Their efforts are honored in how their story was written about. They were made into an example of how ISIS would like others to be as well.

The amount of attention the articles deserved tells of the significance of the stories to the propaganda that ISIS was trying to convey. They are like personal testimonies of prime examples, which did exactly what ISIS is hoping others reading the magazine would do as well. It is as if the authors here are trying to say that if you do as these men did, you might also become a respected and looked-up-to member of our jihadist movement.

*Dabiq*-magazine frequently employed narratives of exemplary behavior to convey its message on *hijrah*. The exemplary individuals were often presented as heroes, which produced the image that the performance of *hijrah* was a quality of a hero. The examples were depicted seeking martyrdom and getting purpose to their life through *hijrah*. The good examples also got to meet role model jihadists, attacked enemies before making *hijrah*, turned away from other Islamist groups, or became pioneers of *hijrah* from their countries. Celebrity jihadists were used as examples and illness was not permitted to be an excuse for not partaking on the journey of *hijrah*. An exception to the way *hijrah* was most often presented in was that returning to Europe to commit attacks was also given as an example of good behavior in relation to *hijrah*. Most of the texts in the magazine seemed to be directed at a male audience. However, the role of women regarding *hijrah* was also a theme in *Dabiq*.

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<sup>116</sup> Dabiq 15, 71.

<sup>117</sup> Dabiq 15, 72.

## 2.6. The Role of Women Regarding Hijrah

In the whole of *Dabiq* magazine, articles that are aimed at women and contain mentions of *hijrah* appear in six different issues. These are issues 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, and 15. The amount of attention given to messaging on *hijrah* aimed at women makes this theme significant. Most of the other article types, which idolize or raise examples of martyred heroes, appeal to men. Women are not forgotten though. Articles for women could be identified from the change in color scheme to reddish or pink hues on the article layout, a female author giving advice through her own experience, or explicit calls on women to act. Even though the propaganda aimed at women is generally confined to articles that are clearly for the female audience, similar themes or techniques for the purposes of the propaganda appear in the texts as in the articles aimed at the male audience. These are, however, on a smaller scale, since they only appear in the articles for women, which are more limited in number than articles aimed at men.

A short section in *Dabiq*'s seventh issue consisted of an interview with the wife of a Paris attacker, who had made *hijrah* to the lands of the Islamic State before her husband performed an attack in France. The attack referred to is the shooting of a policewoman on the 8<sup>th</sup> of January 2015 and four people at a Jewish kosher supermarket on the 9<sup>th</sup> of January 2015 by Amedy Coulibaly. The escape of Coulibaly's wife, who's real name is Hayat Boumeddiene, to Syria is confirmed by news sources.<sup>118</sup> However, there is no way of knowing if the portrayed Umm Basir in the interview is really Coulibaly's wife. This does not matter though since for the purpose of the propaganda the real identity does not affect the effectiveness of the message. The first questions of the interview are: "How was your *hijrah*? And how do you feel now in the land of the Khilāfah?"<sup>119</sup> The wife of the Paris attacker answered as follows:

All praise is due to Allah who facilitated the way for me. I did not find any difficulty. Living in a land where the law of Allah ('azza wa jall) is implemented is something great. I feel at ease now that I have carried out this obligation. All praise is due to Allah. I ask Allah to keep me firm.<sup>120</sup>

This answer to the questions presents an inviting message to the readership of the magazine. It tells the readers that the journey of *hijrah* is not difficult. And even if it is an obligation, it is something that makes you feel at ease after having completed said obligation. The relayed message to the reader incites hope in an easy migration and a good life resulting from performing *hijrah*.

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<sup>118</sup> BBC 2015.

<sup>119</sup> *Dabiq* 7, 50.

<sup>120</sup> *Dabiq* 7, 50.

*Dabiq*'s eighth issue contains an entire article devoted to the issue of *hijrah*, which is directed at women. The woman Umm Sumayah al-Muhajirin allegedly writes this text. In the beginning *hijrah*'s significance to the religion of Islam is amplified unlike before in the previous issues of the magazine:

Hijrah from Makkah to al-Madīnah also represented a great event and important turning point in the prophetic mission, as it contained many great lessons. Rather, it was the greatest event in the history of Islam, and for this reason it was used as the basis for the Islamic calendar.<sup>121</sup>

The *hijrah* referred to here is the historic migration of Prophet Muhammad from the city of Mecca to what today is the city of Medina. This story is used to create meaning to the term of *hijrah* that ISIS uses for the modern *hijrah*, which it is demanding all Muslims around the world to perform. Aiming the message at women seems to attempt to affect the female readership's understanding of *hijrah*. The importance of the prophet's *hijrah* is put parallel to the duty that present day Muslims are implied with in the propaganda.

Another story of *hijrah* in this article, tells the story of a pregnant woman, who migrated with her husband from the United Kingdom.<sup>122</sup> The woman is not referred to by name, but she is made into a heroic example of a true believer as her actions are revered. Even the death of the newborn baby upon arrival to the Islamic State is put into positive light, as "this is better for him than to die through the curriculum of the tawaghit schools"<sup>123</sup>. This text frames a very grim outcome of *hijrah* in a completely opposite way; the mother of the child, who died after *hijrah* is portrayed as a heroic example, while the child's death is deemed a fortune.

The article contained more examples of women making *hijrah* to the lands of the Islamic State. These seem to be used as encouragement for women to migrate too. Perhaps ISIS noticed that not as many women were coming to their controlled territory, as they would have hoped, so they directed the propaganda concerning *hijrah* explicitly at women too. The article glorifies women who made *hijrah*. In addition to the example of the pregnant woman, an elderly woman who migrated with her son, daughter and grandson is revered for her courage with the phrases: "You've raised the bar for everyone after you, O aunt!"<sup>124</sup> However, the article also stresses the duty that women bear towards *hijrah*. The legitimacy for the call to *hijrah* is given through the claimed legitimacy of the Caliphate and it is stated that the "ruling is an obligation upon women just as it is upon men."<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Dabiq 8, 32.

<sup>122</sup> Dabiq 8, 35.

<sup>123</sup> Dabiq 8, 35.

<sup>124</sup> Dabiq 8, 36.

<sup>125</sup> Dabiq 8, 33.

In the tenth issue of *Dabiq*, in an article written by a woman by the name of Umm Sumayyah al-Muhajirah, *hijrah* is mentioned in a historical context, which is later mirrored to the modern day. This article, titled *They Are Not Lawful Spouses for One Another*, tells the story of Prophet Muhammad's daughter Zaynab and her husband Abul-'As Ibn ar-Rabi. The couple was separated by the husband's choice of not following his wife's *hijrah*.<sup>126</sup> This part of the story carries a message of *hijrah* that seems appropriate for the purpose of ISIS. The underlying message in this story is that one should put the will of Allah first, even above the companionship and love of one's spouse. *Hijrah* is more important here than marriage.

The story goes on, however. Since Abul-'As Ibn ar-Rabi had lost his wife because he rejected Islam, by turning back to Islam he received her back.<sup>127</sup> This carries a message that even if a marriage is initially broken by one performing *hijrah*, the end result can still be that the couple gets back together. In the story this was done by divine intervention, since Allah opened the heart of the husband to the truth. By going to the Prophet in Medinah, he effectively performed *hijrah* and thus received back what he had lost out of not obeying Islam. *Hijrah* was the way to reach the happiness in this story.

The article brings this historical story to the present day by mirroring it to a hypothetical situation that a Muslim woman, who is reading the magazine, may be in. It paints a picture of a situation, where a husband is not living like a good Muslim and is committing sin. In this situation, the article says if "he shows arrogance and his pride in his sin takes hold of him, then it's upon you to abandon him in the dunyā so that you may succeed in the Hereafter. And here I call on you to make hijrah to us here in the lands of the blessed Islamic State!"<sup>128</sup>

The propagated message in this part of the article is clear. It does not have to be read between the lines since the author directly speaks to the reader. The message of calling for the performing of *hijrah* is written out profoundly to the woman, who is expected to be reading this article: "I call on you to make hijrah to us", "come", and "make your way to dārul-islām".<sup>129</sup> These phrases are in the imperative form. In English grammar imperative clauses are used when the speaker or writer wants other people to do or not to do something.<sup>130</sup> This shows the intention of the propaganda in this article: the writer wants the reader to make *hijrah*. In addition, the writer asks a rhetorical question confirming the reader's love for Allah

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<sup>126</sup> Dabiq 10, 43.

<sup>127</sup> Dabiq 10, 43.

<sup>128</sup> Dabiq 10, 47.

<sup>129</sup> Dabiq 10, 47.

<sup>130</sup> Carter et al. 2011, 49.

and Prophet Muhammad. In the last part of the call to migrate, the obligation is taken up as a reminder. This text stands as a strong message with the intention to mobilize the reader.

In the next part, the tone shifts again to a more positive one, as the reader is encouraged to not wait for others around her to perform *hijrah* but to be the first to do it:

And do not wait for other women from amongst the wives of Sahwah soldiers to make hijrah before you. Rather, be a model and an example for them all, and what a great honor it would be to be the first.<sup>131</sup>

Here the author seems to try to appeal to the reader's emotions. It is made to seem like an achievement to be the first out of one's social circles to migrate. It is an honorable action. By being the first, one would become a model for others, a pioneer of *hijrah*. This seems to appeal to some kind of religious pride, where it is something wanted or admired to be a good example.

In the eleventh issue of *Dabiq*, an article addresses Muslim women's *hijrah* once again – this time employing guilt as a technique. The text seems to attempt to create a hypothetical situation, in which a couple has not been able to perform *hijrah* and the husband has vowed his commitment to the Islamic State and performed an attack in their home country. He has then been imprisoned and is longing for his wife and family, but the wife tells him she wants a divorce. This stuns and confuses the man.<sup>132</sup> This imagined story seems to try to appeal to the emotions of the wives of imprisoned jihadists, to incite them to support their husbands. It tries to make the target audience feel guilt about having thoughts that relate to divorcing an imprisoned jihadist man. While this feels like the main aim of the text, it cannot be left unnoticed that the hypothetical situation has been produced, because of the couple's inability to make *hijrah*. This gives the impression that such situations could be averted if *hijrah* would have been made.

In the twelfth issue, there is an article aimed at women. In the article, titled *Two, Three or Four*, the issue of *hijrah* gets slipped into the otherwise polygyny-oriented article. The main goal of the article seems to be to make Muslim women, who are in the target audience of the magazine, more accepting of polygamous marriage. However, on the third page of the article *hijrah* is mentioned in a way that almost assumes that the reader accepts the view of *hijrah* of the group behind the magazine: "Why did you make hijrah? Wasn't it to establish the Sharī'ah of Allah in the land? And isn't polygyny a part of this Sharī'ah?"<sup>133</sup> Here, *hijrah* gets used as a tool to legitimize polygyny within the Islamic State's community and the

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<sup>131</sup> Dabiq 10, 48.

<sup>132</sup> Dabiq 11, 43.

<sup>133</sup> Dabiq 12, 21.



readership of the propaganda magazine. The overarching supposition is that the reader accepts *hijrah* and the reason that *hijrah* is performed. This reason is given as the effort to establish sharia law and support a state that is based on the sharia. Then, polygyny is presented as part of the sharia so the person reading must accept polygyny if they already accepted *hijrah*.

In the fifteenth issue of *Dabiq*, in an article with women as the target audience, a Muslim woman by the name Umm Khalid al-Finlandiyyah shares her story. She describes herself as having a Christian upbringing and having turned to Islam after a neighbor of hers introduced her to Islam and lent her a Qur'an. Umm Khalid mentions *hijrah* in the part of her story, where she realized that migrating to the lands of the caliphate was what she needed to do and it was "probably the best thing that happened"<sup>134</sup> to her. The testimonial narrative gives a personal feel to the propaganda. Umm Khalid could work as a source of inspiration for the reader. The reader can imagine themselves in the shoes of a woman, who's husband gets arrested for terrorism and the feelings this would incite against the state behind the arresting.

In the description of Umm Khalid's arrival to the Islamic State, the immediate message for the reader here is a promise of a feeling of joy, excitement and thankfulness. These feelings would come when one manages to successfully complete *hijrah*. Here again the personal account of Umm Khalid makes the message effective by making it relatable. It is made easy to imagine the feelings that Umm Khalid describes here. The text also acknowledges to the reader that there will be challenges with the new way of life as well as being close to bombings. But Umm Khalid stresses that she was still grateful for Allah for allowing her to be there in the lands of Islam.<sup>135</sup> This acknowledgement of the difficulties makes the text seem fairer to the reader. If the joy of living under the Caliphate would be described only through the positives, it would not seem as realistic. The challenges give the overall message and call to *hijrah* a touch of reality, making it more believable. The underlying message is: it will not be easy, but it is still the best thing you can do.

Even though Umm Khalid also tells the readers about the challenges that they will face, when they start thinking and planning their *hijrah*, there is still a clear promise. Allah will take care of everything. All one needs to do as a follower of the call to migrate is to take the first step. Then everything else will fall into place.<sup>136</sup> The obstacles that the Muslims thinking of performing *hijrah* will face also get belittled in this text. At first glance it seems like an

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<sup>134</sup> Dabiq 15, 38.

<sup>135</sup> Dabiq 15, 38.

<sup>136</sup> Dabiq 15, 38.

objective way of telling the message: there will be problems. But after more thorough inspection, what Umm Khalid is actually saying is that many of the challenges are in the person's own head. This is misleading since the obstacles that a person willing to perform *hijrah* could face can also be very real. The plans to migrate could be interfered from the state-level but also at a family level. As an endnote, attacking Christians in their own lands is given as the reserve option, if one is not able to migrate. In this case it is given as an advice.

To summarize, this sub-chapter found that *Dabiq* presented *hijrah* as a duty for Muslim women. Women were promised a good life in the Islamic State resulting from performing *hijrah*. The articles aimed at women, which concerned *hijrah*, encouraged women to support the jihadist men in their lives, to sacrifice their own well-being for *hijrah*, to become pioneers of *hijrah* from their social spheres, and to accept polygyny in the Islamic State after having performed *hijrah*. The magazine also exemplified women who had acted in a way that ISIS wanted. The next sub-chapter explores the theme of alternative actions in relation to *hijrah* presented in *Dabiq*.

## **2.7. Alternative Scenarios and Variations of Hijrah**

In the beginning of *Dabiq*'s publication, *hijrah* was laid out to be an unequivocal duty of every Muslim to migrate to the lands controlled by the Islamic State. There were no possibilities of doing otherwise, if one wanted to remain a righteous Muslim in ISIS's eyes. The duty was presented as simple and strict in that there was only one correct way of acting: migrate to Syria or Iraq. However, alternative scenarios and varying approaches to *hijrah* appeared in *Dabiq*'s later issues. This shows that even though the initial ideology concerning *hijrah* was laid out strictly, the term's understanding showed flexibility. *Hijrah* stretched to the purposes that ISIS saw most useful in its propaganda.

In the eighth issue of *Dabiq*, the area-specific approach to *hijrah* was expanded. An alternative to making *hijrah* to the area of Syria and Iraq was given to the readers: "Libya has become an ideal land of *hijrah* for those who find difficulty making their way to Shām, particularly those of our brothers and sisters in Africa."<sup>137</sup> This becomes an interesting piece of the propaganda concerning *hijrah*, because it shows that ISIS understood that *hijrah* to a certain geographical area may be difficult for some to perform. It is the first time that such an alternative is given. ISIS offered an option for those that find it difficult to come to the lands, where it has demanded every Muslim to migrate to until now in the previous issues of *Dabiq*. Secondly, this piece of text shows that ISIS is able to move its fight's emphasis to another

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<sup>137</sup> *Dabiq* 8, 26.

country simply by informing that the duty of *hijrah* can now be done to another location as well. It was also stated in the same context that battles in Libya were intensifying.<sup>138</sup> This could reveal the growing need for fighters in ISIS's ranks. The invitation to perform *hijrah* to Libya would then fit this scenario.

In the ninth issue of *Dabiq*, the more allowing approach to *hijrah* is pushed even further. In the earlier issues of *Dabiq* (issues 1 through 7) *hijrah* to the Caliphate was quite clearly coined as the obligation and duty of every Muslim. There were no alternatives. However, in the ninth issue of the magazine, the following is said about *hijrah*:

Many of those who attained shahādah fighting the crusaders in their own lands had first taken steps to make *hijrah* to the lands of jihād. These preparatory steps were enough to demonstrate their sincerity, so they were granted shahādah without facing the difficulties of *hijrah*.<sup>139</sup>

This quotation from the foreword of the magazine reveals that the conditions concerning martyrdom and *hijrah* are clarified. If a Muslim was planning to migrate, but died fighting the enemies in their lands before they could migrate, then the martyrdom is granted. In this text it is revealed that the plans to perform *hijrah* suffice to obtain *shahadah*, martyrdom. This could also reveal a step towards a shift in the overall fighting tactic of ISIS. Perhaps ISIS began to realize that it should also encourage its supporters to fight in the enemies' lands and not make *hijrah* such a heavy condition for obtaining martyrdom.

Another authoritative figure, which is quoted to enforce the call to *hijrah* in the ninth issue, is the leader of ISIS, the Caliph himself, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. According to the article, he gave a speech on May 14<sup>th</sup> 2015 (25<sup>th</sup> of Rajab 1436 in the Islamic calendar) titled *March Forth Whether Light or Heavy* in which he addressed the *ummah*, meaning the global community of Muslims. The article quoted al-Baghdadi directly as follows: "And we call upon every Muslim in every place to perform *hijrah* to the Islamic State or fight in his land wherever that may be."<sup>140</sup>

This quote from al-Baghdadi's speech strengthens the idea of waging jihad, where you are. It makes the *hijrah* in relation to fighting less prevailing and brings the alternative of *hijrah* on the same level with *hijrah*. This is in contrast to earlier messages concerning *hijrah*, where migration was presented as the sole choice if one wanted to follow ISIS. This statement carries authoritative weight, because the leader of the Islamic State, the Caliph himself, says it in the text. The fact that al-Baghdadi also authoritatively says that this is what Allah wants and has called upon, imposes a divine authority on the reader. This seems especially effective

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<sup>138</sup> Dabiq 8, 26.

<sup>139</sup> Dabiq 9, 4.

<sup>140</sup> Dabiq 9, 54.

if the reader believes that al-Baghdadi is a legitimate Caliph and therefore the leader of all the Muslims in the world. This message from al-Baghdadi is repeated and rephrased on the same page:

Either ones performs *hijrah* to the wilāyāt of the Khilāfah or, if he is unable to do so, he must attack the crusaders, their allies, the Rāfīdah, the tawāghīt, and their apostate forces, wherever he might be with any means available to him, and he should not hesitate in doing so, nor consult any supposed ‘scholar’ on this obligation.<sup>141</sup>

The repetition could be seen as a rhetorical technique of persuasion. The original message by al-Baghdadi reported in the article is also expanded in this part. The additions concern the case if a Muslim is unable to perform *hijrah*. In the case that *hijrah* is not possible, a Muslim should attack the people of the West (crusaders) and do this with any means possible, without hesitation, and without talking to other Muslim leaders (scholars). Perhaps this reveals a fear in the Islamic State’s propaganda that, if the readers of the magazine go talk with other Muslim leaders, they might be shunned away from the radical views that the propaganda is propagating through the words of their leader, al-Baghdadi.

The shift in weight between *hijrah* and the alternative action goes even further towards the alternative later on in the tenth issue. The context is one, where the soldiers of other Islamic extremist groups are persuaded to refute their support for their own group and join ISIS. The shift in relation between *hijrah* and attacking goes as far as to make *hijrah* the alternative, a secondary choice: “...and if you do not have the courage to charge into their midst and kill as many of them as you can and support the Khilāfah, then make *hijrah* to the land of the Khilāfah, for by Allah, it is the best land for he who wants to make *hijrah* to Allah”<sup>142</sup>.

This is an unprecedented view of the ideology of *hijrah* seen in *Dabiq* magazine. *Hijrah* is not the first priority, but is indeed a secondary option. The reference to courage also puts *hijrah* into a different light than in other contexts. It implies that those who perform *hijrah* from the ranks of the enemy’s side are not courageous. They did not have the courage to attack and kill the people they were fighting with and therefore their option was to perform *hijrah*. Nevertheless, persuading words are attached to the now secondary-seeming option as well, by saying that the lands of the Khilafah are the best lands that one could make *hijrah* to.

The foreword to the thirteenth issue of *Dabiq* praises a man and his wife for a terror attack in San Bernardino, California. The author writes that a married couple performing an

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<sup>141</sup> Dabiq 9, 54.

<sup>142</sup> Dabiq 10, 64.

attack together is something that Allah will bless.<sup>143</sup> The text also attempts to defame men, who have disregarded the duty and obligation to jihad that ISIS has imposed. This is done by comparing the actions of the wife of the San Bernardino attacker to the men, who have not sought to complete their obligation:

And the brother's blessed wife accompanied him despite the fact that combat is not even obligatory upon her, but she did not want to lose the opportunity for shahādah at a time when many "men" of the Ummah have turned away from the obligation of jihād.<sup>144</sup>

This part of the text acknowledges that combat is not obligatory for a woman. Here the obligation of combat is a reference to the obligation of jihad, which has been proclaimed in other issues of *Dabiq* to be an obligation of all Muslims. The text also highlights the sacrifices the attackers made in order to be able to embrace their obligation to fight. These sacrifices are mirrored directly against the obligation to perform *hijrah* and the sacrifices that those, who perform *hijrah*, have to face:

...not only did they leave behind their comfortable lifestyle, but prior to the operation they left their baby daughter in the care of others knowing that they likely wouldn't see her again in this life. Such sacrifices mirror the hardship and difficulty faced by so many Muslims who have embarked upon the path to make *hijrah* to the lands of jihād.<sup>145</sup>

By mirroring the sacrifices of the attackers to the sacrifices of those who perform *hijrah*, the writers make the two alternatives to completing the obligation of every Muslim more equal compared to one another.

A section in the fifteenth and last issue of *Dabiq* is what makes the call to *hijrah* different from its first mentions in the first issues of *Dabiq*:

But if you are unable to do so, then know that you have been blessed with the opportunity to serve a much greater purpose than dwelling among Muslims and waging jihad on the outer edges of the land of Islam. Indeed, you are behind enemy lines, able to strike them where it hurts them most.<sup>146</sup>

The striking of enemies in their own lands is again given as the alternative to migrating. However, here it is described as a blessing to have the opportunity to serve a greater purpose. This suggests that between *hijrah* and attacking the enemies in their own lands, the latter is the preferred option. The author seems to suggest that it is actually better not to perform *hijrah*, since this allows striking the enemies where it hurts them the most. It seems as though the call to *hijrah* just has to be mentioned here, because it has been an on going theme and a key element of the propaganda of ISIS in this magazine. *Hijrah* is an obligation, but attacks behind enemy lines are an "opportunity to serve a much greater purpose"<sup>147</sup>.

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<sup>143</sup> Dabiq 13, 3.

<sup>144</sup> Dabiq 13, 3.

<sup>145</sup> Dabiq 13, 4.

<sup>146</sup> Dabiq 15, 27–28.

<sup>147</sup> Dabiq 15, 28.

In the following paragraph on the same page, the killing of enemies is also described as an obligation:

The blood of the disbelievers is obligatory to spill by default. The command is clear. Kill the disbelievers, as Allah said, ‘Then kill the polytheists wherever you find them’ (At-Tawbah 5). How much more obligatory is doing so after the disbelievers have massacred Muslims everywhere throughout the ongoing crusade against Islam?<sup>148</sup>

Here killing the disbelievers is described as an obligation. Quoting a religious text and posing a rhetorical question strengthen the message. The rhetorical question poses the idea of reciprocity of the violence and revenge for the killing of Muslims by the nations waging war against ISIS. This persuasive messaging tries to appeal to the readers’ feelings. The idea seems to be to incite anger and hate in the readers, which aims at mobilizing them in the direction that ISIS wants.

The theme of alternatives to *hijrah* contained several different messages concerning the concept of migration propagated in *Dabiq*-magazine. These alternatives presented a development to the propagated message on *hijrah* that was initially defined as a clear-cut obligation for all Muslims to migrate to lands controlled by ISIS in Syria or Iraq. Changes to the urge to migrate began to surface roughly after the first half of the 15 issues of *Dabiq*. Other regions of the Islamic State, outside of those in Iraq and Syria were promoted as destinations for *hijrah*. This theme showed that plans for making *hijrah* began to suffice for obtaining martyrdom and fighting where you are was promoted. At times, *hijrah* was given as the secondary option in relation to fighting the enemies. Killing the disbelievers was also defined as an obligation. These aspects to the concept of *hijrah* showed that the propagated message developed over time and the ideology concerning *hijrah* showed elasticity. The next chapter analyzes the ways in which *Rumiyah*-magazine promoted *hijrah*.

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<sup>148</sup> Dabiq 15, 28.

### 3. ANALYSING RUMIYAH

*Hijrah* remained a prominent topic in *Dabiq*'s successor magazine *Rumiyah*. *Rumiyah*'s thirteen issues, published from September 2016 to September 2017, contained 124 mentions of *hijrah*. Although there were two fewer issues published than the previous magazine *Dabiq*, the fewer mentions of *hijrah* cannot be accounted for this reason only. This is because *hijrah* also represented a smaller percentage of all the words in the magazine (0,085%). From *Rumiyah*'s thirteen issues, only the twelfth had no mentions of *hijrah*, while in the ninth issue the term was mentioned only once. All other issues contained multiple mentions. The analysis of this chapter focuses on the themes found in these mentions. These themes, which serve as the sub-headings in this chapter, were (1) calling to *hijrah*, (2) significance and legitimacy of the propagated ideology on *hijrah*, (3) threats to not complying with *hijrah*, (4) cases of exemplary behavior, (5) women's role in the context of *hijrah*, (6) alternative actions and variations of *hijrah*, and (7) *hijrah* as a tool for the atonement of sins.

#### 3.1. Calls to Perform Hijrah

*Rumiyah*-magazine calls on Muslims to perform *hijrah* to the lands of the Islamic State. However, direct calls are fewer and they come in different forms compared to *Dabiq*-magazine. Some calls are indirect, as displayed by the example in the eighth issue of *Rumiyah*, and some call on Muslims to migrate to specific parts of the Islamic State's controlled areas. Quotations of the leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's speeches to call Muslims to perform *hijrah* are absent for example. This may be a result of a decreased need to establish what *hijrah* means for the supporters of ISIS or simply a shift in emphasis in the ideology of *hijrah*.

As mentioned above, the eighth issue of *Rumiyah* features an indirect call to *hijrah*. This occurs via the presentation of the purpose of the media faction and its foreign languages team. The article itself is about a man called Abu Suleyman Ash-Shami and is a part of the series of articles titled *Among the Believers Are Men*. Unlike in previous articles of this series, *hijrah* does not get mentioned in Abu Sulayman Ash-Shami's story of migration to the Islamic State. Instead, the mention of *hijrah* comes in the context of a description of Ash-Shami's work in the media faction of ISIS's organizational structure:

The practical beginning of activity by Abu Sulayman 'al-Halabi' (as he was known to many mujahidin) in the Media Diwan was his working on organizing the foreign languages team, which was started by Shaykh Abu Muhammad al-Furqan to inform Muslims in the east and west about the Islamic State and to urge them to perform *hijrah* to it.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> *Rumiyah* 8, 42.

This mention of *hijrah* is not a part of Abu Sulayman Ash-Shami's own migration, but is still relevant to the message ISIS propagates about *hijrah*. The outright saying of the purpose of the foreign languages team within the media faction (*diwan*) of ISIS, which was to inform and urge Muslims around the world to perform *hijrah* to the Islamic State, serves to legitimize the ideology. This could be seen as an indirect call on Muslims to migrate. In a way this strengthens the ideological message about *hijrah* since the purpose of informing and urging people to do it is talked about openly. This makes it seem less like a hidden agenda. In contrast, the transparency makes the message of urging into performing *hijrah* seem more trustworthy.

In the tenth issue of *Rumiyah* *hijrah* gets mentioned a few times in an interview with the leader of the Islamic State's soldiers in East Asia, Shaykh Abu 'Abdillah al-Muhajir. These mentions are mainly in the same vein as mentions of *hijrah* in early issues of *Dabiq* magazine; they are encouragements and calls to perform *hijrah*. From the introduction to the interview:

He [Shaykh Abu 'Abdillah al-Muhajir] then directs a message through Rumiyah Magazine to all Muslims in the world, calling them to make *hijrah* to the regions in which the soldiers of the Khilafah are widely present in East Asia, and to do so in support of their brothers and in order to establish their state. He also gives glad tidings that many muhajirin from various regions have reached them and joined their ranks.<sup>150</sup>

The message to call Muslims from all around the world to make *hijrah* to East Asia could tell of a strategic shift in which regions ISIS was urging Muslims to perform *hijrah* to. The tenth issue of *Rumiyah* was published in May of 2017, at a time prior to which ISIS had already sustained large territorial losses in Iraq and Syria. In April 2017, *Newsweek* reported that ISIS-controlled territory in Iraq had practically reduced to Mosul and in Syria to peripheral areas with low population densities.<sup>151</sup> Jasminder Singh and Muhammad Haziq Jani discussed the strategic shift in ISIS's urge to call its supporters to fight in East Asia. According to them, ISIS encouraged the robbing and killing of non-Muslims in the Philippines and recognized the pledges of allegiance to the Islamic State by Islamic militant groups in the country.<sup>152</sup> This shows that ISIS had an interest in East Asia and this interest could well be displayed in the propaganda's call to Muslims to perform *hijrah* to the region.

When asked about whether people are performing *hijrah* to East Asia and if there is a way to do so for those who are willing, Shaykh Abu 'Abdillah al-Muhajir answered:

Yes – and all praise is due to Allah – we continue to receive muhajirin, and we welcome them. There are several safe paths and ways to achieve that, but everyone who wishes to march forth must exert

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<sup>150</sup> Rumiyah 10, 37.

<sup>151</sup> O'Connor 2017.

<sup>152</sup> Singh & Jani 2017.



effort in that regard with sincerity and supplicate to Allah that He makes hijrah easy for him and brings him to the arenas of ribat and fighting so that he may attain the pleasure of his Lord, the Most Merciful.<sup>153</sup>

Telling the readers that there are safe ways of performing *hijrah* to join ISIS's ranks in East Asia serves as an encouragement. Whether or not this is true is irrelevant from the perspective of the aim of the propagandistic message. The goal is to try to get people to migrate to East Asia in order to have more soldiers fighting for ISIS in the region. However, regarding the theme of calling Muslims to perform *hijrah*, this part of the text reveals a more relaxed approach to the call in general. Even though the call to *hijrah* was previously presented to all Muslims, here a few pages later stating that it is for "everyone who wishes to march forth"<sup>154</sup> loosens the urgency. This makes it seem optional.

To summarize, *Rumiyah* featured indirect and direct calls on Muslims to perform *hijrah* to the Islamic State. The call understood to be indirect was effectively a description of ISIS's media faction's foreign language team's purpose, to urge Muslims to migrate. This gave the propaganda a feeling of transparency, which may have increased the reader's trust in the propagated message. The direct calls brought forward the idea of individual choice concerning *hijrah* and East Asia as a destination for *hijrah*. Like *Dabiq*-magazine, *Rumiyah* explained to the target audience the significance and legitimacy of the concept of *hijrah* in the worldview that ISIS held. The next sub-chapter analyzes this theme.

### **3.2. Significance and Legitimacy of Hijrah**

*Rumiyah*-magazine also sought to argue for why the call on Muslims to perform *hijrah* was legitimate. *Hijrah* was presented as an integral part of Islam and its significance in the worldview that ISIS holds was strengthened in this magazine. This was often done by presenting historical examples and mirroring them with the present day, but also by showcasing what it was that ISIS meant with *hijrah*.

The first mention of *hijrah* in the first issue of *Rumiyah* magazine argues for the redefining of the five pillars of Islam. Here *hijrah* is presented as an integral part of Islam. The five pillars traditionally are the profession of faith, prayer, giving alms, fasting during Ramadan, and the pilgrimage to Mecca.<sup>155</sup> In the article titled *The Religion of Islam*, the attempt seems to be to justify the ideology and theology behind the Islamic State:

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<sup>153</sup> *Rumiyah* 10, 41.

<sup>154</sup> *Rumiyah* 10, 41.

<sup>155</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica, 2018.

Therefore, the Jama'ah of the Muslims which we have been ordered to cling to, adhere to, and bite onto with our molars, and without which the rule of Islam is not manifested in the land, is built upon five pillars after the pillars of Islam: Hijrah, listening, obeying, jama'ah, and jihad...<sup>156</sup>

This mention of *hijrah* seems to try to justify different fundamentals for the entire religion of Islam, increasing the significance of *hijrah*. In this interpretation, *hijrah* is one of the five pillars. The traditional understanding of the pillars of Islam are not refuted, but neither are they mentioned, which gives the mentioned fundamentals more weight in the eyes of the reader. For the readership of the propaganda, attaching new concepts to the five pillars of Islam, without mentioning the five pillars traditionally understood to be the fundamentals of Islam, may change or distort how the entire religion is understood.

The article *The Religion of Islam* further defines *hijrah* for the reader by presenting some rules for fighting the enemies of Allah. This is done by citing religious text:

When you meet your enemy from the mushrikin, call them to three matters and accept whichever of them they agree to and withhold from fighting them: Call them to Islam. If they agree, accept it from them and withhold from fighting them. Then call them to perform hijrah from their land to the land of the muhajirin, and inform them that if they do that then they will enjoy the same rights and have the same obligations as the muhajirin. If they refuse to perform hijrah, then inform them that they will be like the Bedouins of the Muslims; they will be subject to the rule of Allah, which the believers are subject to, and they will have no share in the war booty and spoils unless they wage jihad with the Muslims (Reported by Muslim from Buraydah).<sup>157</sup>

This text takes the issue of *hijrah* and puts it in the context of fighting the enemies of Allah. If the enemy accepts Islam then the call to perform *hijrah* is presented to them. The obeying of this call to migrate to the land of Islam is a condition for receiving the same rights and obligations as other rightful Muslims. The presentation of such conditions for an enemy is something that was not present in the propaganda concerning *hijrah* in the issues of *Dabiq* magazine. But the treatment of *hijrah* in this part of the article concerns the enemies of Allah. How *hijrah* concerns those, who are already Muslims is taken up next:

“But those who have believed and performed hijrah and fought in the cause of Allah and those who gave shelter and support – it is they who are the believers, truly. For them is forgiveness and noble provision. And those who believed after [the initial hijrah] and performed hijrah and fought with you – they are of you” (Al-Anfal 74-75).<sup>158</sup>

Here the concept of *hijrah* is used as a defining factor of who belongs to the side of Allah. Those who performed *hijrah* (and fought for Allah) are true believers. Conversely, this can be understood to mean that those who did not are not true believers. Therefore, *hijrah* is understood to be a central part of one who is a true believer.

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<sup>156</sup> Rumiya 1, 7.

<sup>157</sup> Rumiya 1, 8.

<sup>158</sup> Rumiya 1, 8.

In the fourth issue of *Rumiyah*, the foreword to the publication is titled *Hijrah Does Not Cease As Long as the Kuffar Are Fought*. The opening paragraph uses a historical narrative from a religious text to justify the main aim of the article, which is to convey the message that *hijrah* was still an obligation for Muslims at the time that the issue of the magazine was published. The text conveys the unchanging nature of *hijrah*:

“O Messenger of Allah, those behind me claim that hijrah has ceased. When does hijrah cease?” Allah’s Messenger said, “Your need is better than their needs. Hijrah does not cease as long as the kuffar are fought” (Reported by Ahmad, an-Nasai, and Ibn Hibban).<sup>159</sup>

This prequel to the main message of the article seems to be used as justification for the continuation of the duty to migrate to the lands of Islam posed by ISIS. The historical context of the quotation is the original *hijrah* by the prophet Muhammad and as such, the idea of *hijrah* not ceasing is placed straight into the modern day situation, where ISIS is fighting its enemies, whom they call *kuffar*. Perhaps this tells of a diluted flow of foreign fighters into the ranks of the Islamic State at the time before the fourth issue of *Rumiyah* was published. It could also tell of jihadist networks’ questioning of the obligation of *hijrah* for every Muslim established earlier by the propaganda of ISIS. What comes afterwards on the same page is original text from the author of this article, confirming the main message and purpose of the short article:

Yes, hijrah will not cease as long as the enemy – the kuffar and the murtaddin – are fought, whether that means the fight is in Iraq or Sham, or whether the fight is somewhere else. For there will be an armed group of this ummah fighting for the cause of Allah until the Messiah descends to lead them in the last of the epic battles, shortly before the Hour is established – just as the truthful and trustworthy Prophet explained.<sup>160</sup>

Even though the performing of *hijrah* is still stressed, the idea behind it seems to have changed from a call to simply perform *hijrah* to a call to perform it as long as there is still fighting against the enemies. The text also has a prophetic part to it. It suggests that at the end of times there will be fighting, and in relation to *hijrah* and the message propagated in this article, this means that *hijrah* will be a requirement even when the Messiah descends.

The article about *hijrah* also addresses the obstacles that those who have wanted to perform *hijrah* to the Islamic State have faced: “So no matter how much the cross worshipers and murtaddin strive to cut off the road to hijrah, some roads will remain open for those who put their trust in Allah.”<sup>161</sup> This signals that *hijrah* has become more difficult in recent times. This idea is supported by a picture on the next page of Turkish constructors building a wall on the border of Turkey and Syria. The caption alleges the aim of the wall is preventing *hijrah*

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<sup>159</sup> *Rumiyah* 4, 2.

<sup>160</sup> *Rumiyah* 4, 2.

<sup>161</sup> *Rumiyah* 4, 2.

for those, who are attempting to perform it. The caption reads: “The Turkish murtaddin build a wall to prevent the muhajirin from entering Sham”<sup>162</sup>. This seems to be a strategic way by ISIS to frame the purpose of the wall to fit its own propaganda message. This is because according to international news, Turkey’s plan officially was exactly the opposite with building the wall on the 911-kilometer border with Syria. The aim was to deter smuggling and militants from Syria, Iraq and Iran into Turkey.<sup>163</sup>

In terms of propagandistic messaging this is a technique of deception through distortion. The purpose of the wall is deliberately presented in a misleading way to support the viewpoint of the requirement to migrate to the lands of the Islamic State. This has the effect of making *hijrah* seem to the reader of *Rumiyah*-magazine more prevalent with its effect internationally. The reader may think that Turkey sees *hijrah* as such a big challenge that it builds a wall on the border with Syria. The distortion of such a piece of information is a more subtle technique than outright lying and it is therefore more effective.<sup>164</sup>

In the fifth issue of *Rumiyah* an article titled *The Siyahah of Jihad* tackles ideological fallacies that some Muslims hold to be true. These are fallacies in the eyes of ISIS and from the perspective of their propaganda’s message. The alleged wrong understandings are mainly about the terms jihad and *siyahah*, but *hijrah* does get mentioned too:

This hadith is from among that which some people of *hijrah* and jihad have incorrectly understood, thinking that the *siyahah* of jihad means, as according to its modern usage, “travelling from country to country for the purpose of pleasure or sightseeing and discovery.”<sup>165</sup>

This part of the text that mentions *hijrah* seems to try to fine down the definition of the term by giving an example of what the term does not mean. A footnote at the bottom of the page revealed that *siyahah* “is often wrongly translated as ‘tourism’ in English”<sup>166</sup>. The issue for ISIS here is that some Muslims understand the migration to different lands simply as a pursuit of luxuries. ISIS seems to want to refute this. The group wants to clarify that the nice things, which may come as a consequence of performing *hijrah*, are proof that one has followed and understood the ideology of the religious terms of *hijrah*, jihad and *siyahah* correctly.

The understanding of *siyahah* is continued on the next page, by linking it even more deeply with *hijrah*:

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<sup>162</sup> Rumiyah 4, 3.

<sup>163</sup> Coskun & Gumrukcu 2018.

<sup>164</sup> Bakir et al. 2018, 12.

<sup>165</sup> Rumiyah 5, 20.

<sup>166</sup> Rumiyah 5, 20.

“There is neither in the Quran nor for the ummah of Muhammad any siyahah except for hijrah” (Reported by at-Tabari). He also said, “Their siyahah was the hijrah they performed when they made hijrah to Madinah” (Reported by Ibn Abi Hatim).<sup>167</sup>

In the seventh issue of *Rumiyah*, the first mention of *hijrah* comes in an article that is not primarily about *hijrah*. Rather, the article is about how some actions by Muslim people can nullify their Islam, in other words, throw them out of the religion – even without them realizing it themselves. The author of the article is given as Umm Musa al-Finlandiyyah. She describes life for a proper Muslim living in non-Muslim countries (or *dar al-kufr*) to be challenging because of the difficulty of avoiding actions that can lead to the nullification of one’s status as a Muslim:

While the Islamic State tries to protect the Muslims living in its shade from kufr and riddah, every Muslim living in Dar al-Kufr must study for himself and protect himself from these actions, and having made hijrah from Finland, I can fully attest to how difficult it is for one to do so.<sup>168</sup>

*Hijrah* in Umm Musa al-Finlandiyyah’s case serves as an action that she made in order to escape the framed difficulties of living in a Western country as a Muslim. In her statement Finland seems like it is one of the most difficult countries for a Muslim to live righteously in. This is because, after performing *hijrah* from there, she “can fully attest to how difficult it is for one to do so.”<sup>169</sup> *Hijrah* is portrayed as an escape from this difficulty to an easier following of Islam. The action of *hijrah* also highlighted the difficulty for the author, so she utilizes her *hijrah* as evidence in her testimony about the easier following of Islam in the Islamic State.

Another mention of *hijrah* in the eighth issue of *Rumiyah* comes from an article published in Abu Mus’ab az-Zarqawi’s name. Zarqawi was the al-Qaeda affiliated jihadist of Jordanian origin, who died in 2006, and whose ideas ISIS has actively used in its propaganda magazines *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah*. The text in Zarqawi’s article aims to compare the contemporaries of prophet Muhammad to modern day Muslims:

Such did the Prophet’s companions, who are the best of the creation after the prophets, endure the bitterness of hijrah and the loss of wealth, family, and homes, all for the cause of Allah... so where are we in relation to them?!<sup>170</sup>

This text seems to try to establish that modern day Muslims should act in the same way prophet Muhammad’s contemporaries acted. *Hijrah* is described as a bitter process, but simultaneously as something that prophet Muhammad’s comrades endured for the cause of

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<sup>167</sup> Rumiyah 5, 21.

<sup>168</sup> Rumiyah 7, 20.

<sup>169</sup> Rumiyah 7, 20.

<sup>170</sup> Rumiyah 8, 24.

Allah. Zarqawi asks rhetorically in the article: “where are we in relation to them?”<sup>171</sup> This nails down the comparison between the historic and the present day. The idea of trying to be more like the companions of the Prophet gets supported through the usage of such a rhetorical technique of persuasion. Therefore from this text it can be concluded that ISIS wanted to propagate the idea that, even if bitter, *hijrah* is something that Muslims should endure.

In summary, like *Dabiq* had done before, *Rumiyah* also explained the significance and legitimacy of the concept of *hijrah* propagated in the magazine. The aspects that rose from this theme in *Rumiyah* were that *hijrah* was described as a central part of Islam and *hijrah* was described as unchanging by linking it to prophetic rhetoric. Religious texts were used to legitimize the propagated view of *hijrah*. Reminiscent of *Dabiq*, adhering to the call to migrate was set out to be a defining characteristic of a true believer. In addition to the previously mentioned aspects, *Rumiyah* introduced new views on *hijrah*’s significance. In this magazine *hijrah* was portrayed as internationally significant and as a solution to the difficulties of living in non-Muslim countries. The definition of *hijrah* was clarified by explaining that *hijrah* should not be simply tourism for Muslims. *Hijrah*’s significance was also discussed in relation to the enemies of Islam. If enemies accepted Islam and accepted *hijrah*, they would no longer be fought and they would receive the same rights as the rightful believers. *Rumiyah* featured no promises of benefits in the temporal world resulting from *hijrah*. Thus, the next sub-chapter looks at the theme of threats presented for not complying with the call to perform *hijrah*.

### **3.3. Threats to Non-Compliance**

When it comes to persuading readers into performing *hijrah*, *Rumiyah* magazine also employed the tactic of imposing threats for not adhering to the obligation to migrate. In *Rumiyah*, however, this tactic was not as prominent as in *Dabiq*, and only one example could be extracted from the texts. In the sixth issue, *hijrah* is mentioned as an example of something, in which Muslims can be disobedient and can therefore exclude themselves from the protection that the jihadists claim to provide for obedient Muslims:

So those who disobey Allah’s command to separate themselves from the mushrikin and to make *hijrah* from their lands, and instead intentionally mix with them, in such a way that the mujahid is unable to distinguish between the Muslim and the mushrik, then such people have brought harm upon themselves and the protection of the mujahidin is exempt from them – and Allah will resurrect them according to their intentions.<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> *Rumiyah* 8, 24.

<sup>172</sup> *Rumiyah* 6, 14.

This mention of *hijrah* seems to serve as an example of bad behavior of Muslims from the perspective of ISIS's propaganda. According to the message propagated here, righteous Muslims should distinguish themselves from wrongful believers (or *mushrikin*). Making *hijrah* is framed as correct behavior and therefore not making *hijrah* is something that contributes to the labeling of Muslims as *mushrikin*. The threat aspect present here is that if one does not distinguish oneself from the nonbelievers, there is no protection available by the rightful believers. What is implied is that this means that one also becomes a target in the eyes of rightful jihadists.

The message seems to justify the targeting of Muslims by violent jihadist attacks, whether intentionally or as collateral victims. What justifies Muslims as ISIS's targets too is their mixing with the wrongly believing and the refusal to perform *hijrah*. This message comes under the subtitle *Unintentional Killing of Some Muslims Is Not 'Deeming Their Blood Halal'* in an article that claims to shed light on an attack that took place in an Istanbul nightclub in January 2017. A lone gunman, who killed 39 in a timeframe of seven minutes, executed the attack in the name of ISIS. *The Guardian* reported that two-thirds of those that died in the nightclub were foreigners and many of them originated from the Middle East.<sup>173</sup> This could be why ISIS felt the need to address the issue of targeting Muslims as well. *Hijrah* served in the justification of the attacks as a tool to frame those who died as bad or wrongful Muslims. The killed Muslims had not made *hijrah* and therefore deserved to die, according to the propagated message.

The overall message in the propagation of threats in *Rumiyah* magazine was layered with three levels. While the presentation of these threats was completed fairly shortly, there were three separate layers that stood out from the threats for not complying with the obligation of *hijrah*. Firstly, the audience was threatened with violence and becoming susceptible to harm. This was backed with the example of what happened to the nightclub attendees in Istanbul. Secondly, the exemption from ISIS's protection, or from the protection of the *mujahidin* (plural of *mujahid*, which means one, who engages in jihad), is linked to the threat of harm against non-compliers with *hijrah*. Thirdly and finally, an implication of a possible punishment by Allah in resurrection is presented. The punishment threat is not stated explicitly, but rather implied – it has to be read between the lines. It is understood from the context that non-compliance to the behavior, which ISIS expects regarding *hijrah*, is wrong behavior. Therefore, it suffices in the magazine's text to say that Allah will resurrect the non-

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<sup>173</sup> Grierson. 2017.

compliers “according to their intentions”<sup>174</sup>. The end result of the resurrection is left open though, so it is difficult to say exactly what it is that the audience should feel threatened by. What is clear is that a threat is presented.

*Rumiyah* employed threats as a persuading technique to entice readers to perform *hijrah*. Aspects that arose from the magazine’s issues in this respect threatened the reader with susceptibility to harm. This susceptibility emerged from the exemption from ISIS’s protection as a result of refusing to comply with the call to *hijrah*. The Istanbul nightclub attack, where Muslims also died was presented as an example of what could be the fate of those who did not act accordingly. Non-compliance with the call to *hijrah* would also entail a punishment from Allah. The next sub-chapter analyzes the exemplary behavior in relation to *hijrah* presented in *Rumiyah*-magazine.

### **3.4. Exemplary Behavior**

Like in *Dabiq*, in *Rumiyah* individuals who had behaved in the way that ISIS wanted were made into heroic examples. The fate of the people presented was often *shahadah*, or martyrdom. The *Among the Believers are Men* –article series continued in *Rumiyah*, which shows the significance of these types of examples to the purpose of ISIS’s propaganda magazines. *Hijrah* was presented as central element on the path to attaining martyrdom, but examples also revealed different elements in the ideology of *hijrah* that were propagated in *Rumiyah*.

The first issue of *Rumiyah* featured the familiar article type from *Dabiq*-magazine, the *Among the Believers are Men* –article. In *Rumiyah*’s first article of this type, the story of a man by the name of Abu Mansur al-Muhajir is presented. Abu Mansur’s *hijrah* gets described as follows:

Abu Mansur was released from prison more emboldened and more steadfast upon this path. He quickly set out to make *hijrah*, leaving behind his beloved wife and four children in order to bring triumph to this religion and to quench his thirst for the blood of the Nusayriyyah.<sup>175</sup>

The description of Abu Mansur’s *hijrah* contains an element of sacrifice. The man had to sacrifice seeing his family so that he could pursue the cause of fighting for the religion. This sets an example of a sacrificial approach to the migration to the lands of the Islamic State. The *Nusayriyyah* mentioned in the text are the religious minority group of Syria, called Alawites or Nusayris. The ruling Assad family belongs to this religious group.<sup>176</sup> That Abu Mansur is

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<sup>174</sup> *Rumiyah* 6, 14.

<sup>175</sup> *Rumiyah* 1, 15.

<sup>176</sup> Spencer 2016.



described to have a thirst for the blood of the Alawites, a specific group of people, is a new aspect for a motivation to perform *hijrah* in the propaganda of ISIS in *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah*.

Even though Abu Mansur's *hijrah* did not initially aim at joining ISIS, the completion of *hijrah* for a legitimate cause from ISIS's perspective is justified in the text by explaining that he quickly wanted to join the correct side, the side of ISIS:

Allah opened the door of *hijrah* for Abu Mansur and he became among the first muhajirin to enter the blessed land of epic battles – the land of Sham. He quickly sought to join the Islamic State – which was operating under the name 'Jabhat an-Nusrah' at the time – and become a part of the project to unite the Ummah through the revival of the Khilafah.<sup>177</sup>

Joining the ranks of ISIS comes second in the story of Abu Mansur's *hijrah*. He migrated firstly to join the battles in Syria. The text gives the impression that only once he was in the country did he seek to join the Islamic State. This differs from how some other stories of *hijrah* have been framed, since usually joining ISIS is the motivation for migration.

In the second issue of *Rumiyah* the issue of *hijrah* appears in the story of five Bengali jihadists, who committed an attack in Dhaka, Bangladesh. The men are described as "soldiers of the Khilafah in Bengal"<sup>178</sup>. According to the article in *Rumiyah*, they attacked a Christian-owned restaurant, where they killed 24 and wounded 50 Bengali soldiers during a 12-hour siege of the establishment.<sup>179</sup> As the profiles of the five attackers get presented in the article, one of the men, Abu Muharib al-Bengali, is described to have wanted to perform *hijrah* to Syria and Libya, but never managed to complete the journey:

After the declaration of the Khilafah and call to *hijrah* from the Islamic State leadership, Abu Muharib tried to perform *hijrah* to Sham and then to Libya but was unable to reach either land. Nevertheless, he got the reward for *hijrah* without actually performing it, as his steadfastness in jihad is a testimony to the sincerity of his intention, in shaallah.<sup>180</sup>

This text reveals that in this case the propaganda of ISIS treats a man that has not been able to perform *hijrah*, but has shown commitment to the cause, as having performed *hijrah*. The message says that Abu Muharib received the reward for *hijrah* without actually performing it. This is an exception to what has been told to the readers of the propaganda magazines earlier – normally *hijrah* has been said to be required for receiving the blessings from Allah both in the here-and-now and in eternity.

Oddly enough, the leader of the five Bengali attackers, Abu Rahiq al-Bengali is also described to have had the intention of performing *hijrah*. This gets revealed in a footnote as an editor's note:

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<sup>177</sup> *Rumiyah* 1, 16.

<sup>178</sup> *Rumiyah* 2, 9.

<sup>179</sup> *Rumiyah* 2, 9.

<sup>180</sup> *Rumiyah* 2, 10.

Editor's Note: His other mujahid companions added that he also tried to perform hijrah to Sham, Libya, and West Africa before the establishment of the Soldiers of the Khilafah in Bengal. He was very serious about his religion, daily exercises, and seeking of knowledge and would never waste time in petty debates.<sup>181</sup>

The way that Abu Rahiq's intention of *hijrah* gets presented makes the narrative seem a little odd. It comes across as reassurance of him being qualified as a good Muslim and jihadist in the eyes of ISIS. The intention of *hijrah* does not get placed in the text itself, but rather as a footnote. How the editor's note writes that Abu Rahiq's fellow fighters wanted to add this aspect to his profile or personal story suggests that the author did not initially have the intention of placing such a statement in the text. On the other hand, how the information is presented could well be done on purpose to make Abu Rahiq's intention of *hijrah* less central in the text. Having the information in an editor's note in a footnote as smaller sized text certainly leaves the issue of Abu Rihaq's *hijrah* aside. It is not as central as *hijrah* has been in other martyr stories in *Dabiq* magazine.

*Hijrah* also appeared in the sixth issue of *Rumiyah* in an historical story about a Bedouin man, who wanted to perform *hijrah* with prophet Muhammad. This mention came in an article that showcased exemplary behavior of people, who were eager to attain martyrdom. It was titled *Examples of the Sahabah's Eagerness to Attain Shahadah*. The story of the Bedouin starts with the Bedouin's declaration of his willingness to perform *hijrah* with Prophet Muhammad. He then explains to the prophet that his reason for following him was so that he would be killed in battle and would get to enter paradise. Later the Bedouin got killed in the exact way that he had wanted. This is what followed in the article's text:

He was then carried to the Prophet having been hit by an arrow in the spot he had pointed to, so the Prophet said, "Is it him?" They said, "Yes." So he said, "He was truthful to Allah, so Allah was truthful to him." The Prophet then shrouded him with his garment. He then brought him forward and prayed over him, and among that which he said in his prayer was, "O Allah, this is Your slave. He set out, performing hijrah for Your cause, and was then killed as a shahid. I am a witness to that."<sup>182</sup>

The story of the Bedouin man, who wanted to perform *hijrah* alongside the prophet and die in battle by an arrow to the neck in order to receive martyrdom served as an example of what ISIS held as exemplary behavior. This is supported by the fact that the article speaks positively of dying in battle as a means to attain martyrdom and be admitted to paradise. *Hijrah* was not the main issue in the article, but it was also not a negative thing either in the Bedouin's martyrdom narrative. Rather, the Bedouin's willingness to perform *hijrah* with the prophet for the reason of attaining martyrdom got emphasized. This is what was exemplary in

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<sup>181</sup> Rumiyah 2, 10.

<sup>182</sup> Rumiyah 6, 41.

the Bedouin's case. This is the message that ISIS wanted to propagate in the context of this mention of *hijrah*.

The *Among the Believers are Men*—article in *Rumiyah*'s eleventh issue exemplifies a jihadist, Abu Mujahid al-Faransi, who funded other people's *hijrah*. “[H]e would not be stingy with money when it was requested from him for the cause of da’wah or in support of those seeking *hijrah* for Allah’s cause...”<sup>183</sup> This depiction of a man, who selflessly gave money to those who could not finance their own *hijrah*, makes Abu Muhajid al-Faransi seem heroic. According to the article, his way of obtaining the wealth was through robberies with a group of like-minded young men.<sup>184</sup> This continues the theme that was put forward in an earlier article in the same issue of *Rumiyah* about stealing from the nonbelievers being permissible.

Abu Mujahid al-Faransi's article takes a further dive into the theme of removing obstacles (in addition to the financial one) or excuses that prevent performing *hijrah*:

Abu Mujahid would sit the brothers down, reminding them of the virtues of *hijrah* and the blessings of living under the shade of the Shari’ah, and raising one’s children in Dar al-Islam. If he saw any brother finding excuses in worldly factors that were obstructing him he would immediately see it as his duty to remove these preventative factors by any means possible. So if anyone was prohibited from traveling he would purchase for them a forged passport...<sup>185</sup>

The idea about removing obstacles and getting rid of excuses by any means possible supports a strong message of urging to perform *hijrah*. While at the same time the reader may feel that there should be no excuse to abstain from performing *hijrah*, there may also be an admiration for Abu Mujahid al-Faransi inspired from the text. Abu Mujahid's actions are made to seem heroic. This becomes clear in a paragraph, where he is compared to ‘Uthman, “who financed the entire Muslim army with his own personal wealth”<sup>186</sup>.

The rest of the article concerning Abu Mujahid al-Faransi tells the narrative of how Abu Mujahid embarked on a journey of *hijrah* with a group of Muslims. Through an explicitly descriptive style of writing the story of *hijrah* is made into a thriller-like read that captures the attention of the reader. After many twists and turns in the story, most of the group with the lead of Abu Mujahid reached the lands of Syria, where they were headed. The story of Abu Mujahid ends with him obtaining martyrdom, which places the cherry on top of his heroic story about helping others to perform *hijrah*, performing *hijrah* himself, and getting to die fighting for the cause of ISIS.<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> *Rumiyah* 11, 47.

<sup>184</sup> *Rumiyah* 11, 46.

<sup>185</sup> *Rumiyah* 11, 48.

<sup>186</sup> *Rumiyah* 11, 48.

<sup>187</sup> *Rumiyah* 11, 49–52.

These examples of good behavior showed to the readership what it was that ISIS expected from its readers regarding *hijrah*. The presented cases showed that an exemplary person should be willing to sacrifice their own well being, turn away from other Islamist groups by joining ISIS, seek martyrdom, help others' *hijrah*, and lead others on their path to *hijrah*. New aspects in *Rumiyah* were the reverence of an individual who thirsted the blood of ISIS's enemies and the receiving of the rewards of *hijrah* for only having the intention of performing it.

### **3.5. The Role of Women Regarding Hijrah**

*Rumiyah*-magazine also featured articles aimed specifically at women. Concerning the message of *hijrah*, these articles had themes such as supporting one's husband, lying to protect family members, remarrying if a husband obtained martyrdom, and raising future jihadists after *hijrah* has been made. These ideas were mainly propagated through the use of example individuals.

In the second issue of *Rumiyah* in an article titled, *Stories of Steadfastness*, the story of a historical figure, of a woman, gets described. The main message of the article is that women should support their husbands as they wage jihad or perform *hijrah*. This is a recognizable theme from *Dabiq*'s articles with women as the target audience. The point seems to be to encourage women to hold solidly in their religion and to remember that they also have a role in Allah's plan. *Hijrah* gets mentioned on the second page of the short article. This mention is in the story of Asma:

She was a great role model of steadfastness and jihad. This was Asma, whose father made *hijrah* with the Prophet and took with him all of his wealth, leaving nothing for his family. But she did not complain or become restless. Instead, she defended her father against her grandfather's suspicions.<sup>188</sup>

The story of Asma goes on to describe how she fooled her blind grandfather to think that her father would have left some of his wealth for the family when departing for his *hijrah*. The point that comes across to the reader, the present-day target audience, seems to be that one should not expect life to be easy after a family member performs *hijrah*. In addition, there is an underlying recommendation of lying to others in order to protect them from the knowledge that someone close has left their family in a challenging situation by performing *hijrah*, which could cause feelings of anger, heartbreak or disappointment. In the story presented, the woman bears the burden of having to lie to her grandfather. Since this story is in a propagandistic magazine, the message can be taken as an example of what a woman's ideal behavior would be like from ISIS's perspective.

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<sup>188</sup> *Rumiyah* 2, 30.

The story of Asma continues to describe how, because of her father's following of Allah's will and performing of *hijrah* with Prophet Muhammad, in addition to having to bear the burden of lying to her grandfather, she also had to endure violence:

Likewise, Asma did not escape the violence of the taghut Abu Jahl... So Abu Jahl, who was a vulgar and vile man, raised his hand and slapped my cheek, causing my earrings to fall to the ground... Such is the state of the Muslimah who believes in her Lord and thinks only the best of Him, expecting to be tormented for the sake of her religion.<sup>189</sup>

The last sentence is original text from the author of the article for *Rumiyah*-magazine. This reveals that the point of the story of Asma is to give an example of how ISIS expects Muslim women to act. When following the will of Allah, they should expect to face violent treatment and to have to endure painful things. The promise in the text is that Allah will think the best of the people that hold steadfast in their religion, when they face such things. The intention of this message could be to encourage the target audience of the propaganda magazine, who live in the West in non-Muslim countries, to hold tight in their religion if they would face torment from the non-Muslims around them. Enduring pain or some form of coercion due to the *hijrah* that women's husbands or fathers have made is normalized and even idolized in this text.

The fourth issue of *Rumiyah* features an article about marrying the widow women of killed martyrs. As the title *Marrying Widows Is An Established Sunnah* suggests, the aim is to justify why the remarrying of widowed women is acceptable. As is common in articles establishing a point or justifying an ideology in the two magazines, historical figures provide the example of what has been good or acceptable behavior. A woman by the name Sahabiyyah Asma Bint 'Umayy is mentioned as a good example. Her exemplary story includes *hijrah* as well:

Likewise, there is a good example for the believing women in the Sahabiyyah Asma Bint 'Umayy, the performer of two *hijrahs* – may Allah be pleased with her and her husbands. It is mentioned in 'Ma'rifat as-Sahabah' by Abu Nu'aym that "she performed *hijrah* with her husband Ja'far Ibn Abi Talib. In the land of al-Habashah, she bore him 'Abdullah, 'Awn, and Muhammad..." Then Ja'far was killed, so Abu Bakr as-Siddiq married her and she bore him Muhammad Ibn Abi Bak as-Siddiq in the year of the Farewell Hajj at ash-Shajarah. Then Abu Bakr passed away, so 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib married her and she bore him Yahya Ibn 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib.<sup>190</sup>

The mention of *hijrah* in this context is a smaller detail, since the topic of the article was about the remarrying of women after their husbands died or were killed. However, *hijrah* is still a central part of the good example of a woman. In addition, it seems that since performing *hijrah* is framed as a positive thing throughout the two propaganda magazines of ISIS, it could be strategically added to emphasize the goodness of the given example of

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<sup>189</sup> Rumiyah 2, 30.

<sup>190</sup> Rumiyah 4, 32.

Sahabiyyah Asma Bint ‘Umayy. She was not only exemplary in her marital issues, but also a good example of a righteous believer, which she showed by making two *hijrahs*.

In the eleventh issue of *Rumiyah* *hijrah* is mentioned in an article aimed at women. The article’s main point is to clarify the role and importance of women in the waging of jihad.

*Hijrah* gets mentioned in a paragraph encouraging women to purify their lives and concentrate their attention to supporting their husbands in the fighting and raising their children as future jihadists:

Did we not leave the most beloved ones to us behind when we took our first steps on our *hijrah*? So why it is that after having purified our hearts of the Dunya some of us are caught up in the traps of shaytan, with our hearts being contaminated and becoming attached to the Dunya once more by making foods, drinks, gossip, slander, idle speech, and materialistic objects our main concern? How sad is it that we are witnessing sisters chasing after the Dunya here instead of making their priority the support of their mujahid husbands and the raising of their children to emulate the likes of Khalid Ibn Walid and ‘Abdullah Ibn az-Zubayr.<sup>191</sup>

The mention of *hijrah* is short and the ideological and practical sides of the term are not dwelled upon. However, the idea behind this mention seems to be a supposition that the reader has made *hijrah* already. On the other hand, the aim could be pressuring the reader to doing it by establishing that *hijrah* has already been performed by the reader as expected. This could be effective in a reader, who has been thinking of performing *hijrah*, but has not yet done it. The context around the mention of *hijrah* reveals ISIS’s idea of the role of women in relation to *hijrah*. After *hijrah* the role is to support the fighting husbands and raise future jihadists.

The thirteenth issue of *Rumiyah* features an article titled *The Hijrah of Umm Sulaym al-Muhajirah*. As is evident from the title, the text is about the migrating of Umm Sulaym al-Muhajirah. Her *hijrah* was full of twists and turns, but as tends to be the trend in these stories of *hijrah* in *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah* the encouraging outcome was that she eventually made it to the Islamic State:

Today, I continue to be grateful to Allah that my children and I are in the Islamic State. And despite everything that has occurred, I am forever grateful to Allah that He has granted us the blessing of living in the Khilafah under the shade of tawhid and the Shari’ah, where the Crusader armies have united in their quest to invade us, purely because we believe in and implement “La ilaha illallah.”<sup>192</sup>

A testimony like this serves the purpose of the ideology surrounding *hijrah* in the propaganda. The person in question, Umm Sulaym al-Muhajirah is grateful for having reached the lands of the Islamic State. She is an example of good behavior and her positive reaction to living under the rule of ISIS serves this purpose. For the reader and potential performer of *hijrah* this is a

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<sup>191</sup> Rumiyah 11, 13.

<sup>192</sup> Rumiyah 13, 35.

motivating message. It tells of happiness that one finds from reaching the lands controlled by ISIS, even if the journey may be difficult.

*Rumiyah*-magazine presented multiple aspects to the role of women regarding *hijrah*. Women were instructed to support the jihadist men, sacrifice their own well-being for the purpose of *hijrah*, and even to endure violence. The issues of *Rumiyah* provided examples of women who had acted in a way that ISIS wanted. Women were promised good life in the Islamic State. In addition, the magazine obliged women to raise future jihadists and to remarry when widowed after a jihadist husband died in fighting. Many of these aspects seemed to try to subordinate women into a role that suited them in ISIS's worldview. Next, the alternative actions and variations of *hijrah* presented in *Rumiyah* will be analyzed.

### **3.6. Alternative Scenarios and Variations of Hijrah**

*Rumiyah*-magazine presented alternatives for the readers, if *hijrah* for them was not possible. Direct instructions for terror attacks were prominent in the magazine, but in this chapter and for the purpose of this thesis, only those alternative actions that were mentioned in relation to *hijrah* were considered. This is because they reveal the relation between *hijrah* and the other options.

The third issue of *Rumiyah* featured a direct instruction of attacking Turkish authorities and religious leaders, if the path to perform *hijrah* has been blocked. The directive is written so that it reflects the reactive alternative to a blocked *hijrah*:

O soldiers of the Khilafah in Turkey! O you whose path to performing hijrah to Dar al-Islam has been blocked by the murtadd, Turkish border patrol forces! You must strike the Turkish taghut and his murtadd followers. "Fight them; Allah will punish them at your hands, He will disgrace them, He will support you against them, and He will heal the breasts of a believing people" (At-Tawbah 14). Start with the imams of kufr and the pillars of taghut therein. Attack the police, judges, and military. Attack the scholars of the taghut and the supporters of Erdogan's political party (AKP) as well as other murtadd parties allied to him. And in the midst of your war against these people, do not forget to kill the citizens of Crusader nations wherever you find them. Make examples of them for those behind them to be terrorstruck and take revenge by killing them for the crimes perpetrated against your brothers.<sup>193</sup>

This message is a multifaceted one. It begins with the reason for the directions to attack: the blocking of *hijrah* by the Turkish border guard. The initial and general order to attack the Turkish leader and his followers is followed by a quote from a religious text, which promises the support of Allah for those who follow the order to attack. What follow are more concrete instructions on who should be targeted. This includes state authorities such as police and military forces as well as religious and political leaders. In the end, the reader is reminded about attacking the citizens of Western countries as well. The reason given for this is that they

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<sup>193</sup> Rumiyah 3, 3.

are, through the military operations of their countries, responsible for the killing of Muslims in the Middle-East. *Hijrah* plays a big role in the propagated message of inciting into violence. The reason for attacking in the first place is described as the blocking of the Islamic State's soldiers' ability to perform *hijrah*.

The third issue of *Rumiyah* propagates a message of *hijrah*, in which migration to other areas of the Islamic State outside of Syria and Iraq is encouraged. This reveals an alternative to the mainstream idea of *hijrah* that has been propagated earlier. In this ideal, *hijrah* is to Iraq or Syria, but as the text shows, alternative destinations are also a possibility:

And we will not miss this opportunity to remind our Muslim brothers everywhere that if the roads for making *hijrah* to Iraq and Sham are closed or confined, then Allah has made an open path for them to make *hijrah* to one of those other blessed *wilayah*, where they might uphold another solid structure of Islam and obtain the merit of precedence in supporting the religion of Allah and making His word supreme.<sup>194</sup>

Encouraging Muslims to perform *hijrah* into other areas, in case they cannot migrate into Syria or Iraq, comes across as a new perspective to the ideology of *hijrah* that was initially propagated in the first issues of *Dabiq*-magazine. The other *wilayah* are areas in countries where groups of jihadists have pledged allegiance (in other words they have given *bay'ah* to the Islamic State) and the Islamic State has gained control over the areas in question. The term *wilayah* means region in Arabic, and in the context of ISIS's propaganda, it signifies an administrative area of the Islamic State. The encouragement to migrate to other areas of the Islamic State could signal of a strategic change in ISIS's attitude to the concept of *hijrah* as a whole. In this case the balance of imposing a duty of *hijrah* or a duty to attack the enemies in their own countries is shifted to performing *hijrah* to the other areas of the Islamic State, if *hijrah* to the Islamic State's areas in Syria or Iraq is not possible.

The eleventh issue of *Rumiyah* incites Muslims to steal from the nonbelievers (*kuffar*) as an alternative to *hijrah*. The development of the text first showcases Prophet Muhammad doing it, giving the action authoritative legitimacy. Then the action is brought to the present day, by arguing for how it is considered permissible and why it is actually an alternative to *hijrah*:

When the Prophet performed *hijrah* to Madinah, the source of his provision was *ghanimah*, and it is the best source of provision, for the wealth that is taken from the *kuffar* by force is more pure than that which a man obtains in any other way.<sup>195</sup>

In the text above, Prophet Muhammad is said to have taken the wealth of nonbelievers (*kuffar*). In a similar way, the reader can now understand that through partaking on a journey

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<sup>194</sup> *Rumiyah* 3, 9.

<sup>195</sup> *Rumiyah* 11, 38.



of *hijrah* one can access the permission of stealing from nonbelievers. The permission to steal from nonbelievers is reinforced later on the same page. Here, earning through honest work is compared to taking the wealth of nonbelievers by force:

Some Muslims today may not like taking the wealth of the kuffar by force and may feel that the wealth they obtain doing other work is better, and this is incorrect, for the best of halal according to the text of the Quran is *ghanimah*, and it was the provision of the Prophet after his *hijrah* to Madinah.<sup>196</sup>

The stolen wealth is labeled as *halal*, which means that it is permissible or lawful.<sup>197</sup>

*Ghanimah*, which is also mentioned in the text, means wealth taken from enemies during war.<sup>198</sup> After arguing for why stealing from non-believers is permissible and recommended, the text presents taking the wealth and destroying the property of nonbelievers as a direct alternative to *hijrah*:

And there is no doubt that the kuffar today use their wealth to mobilize their armies and their capabilities, so it is upon the muwahhidin to discover and conceive new methods of weakening the kuffar's economies and taking or destroying their wealth. And it is upon the Muslims – specifically those who reside in dar al-kufr and cannot find a way to make *hijrah* – to do what Abu Basir did to the mushrikin of Makkah. And there is no doubt that exhausting the wealth of the kuffar today has a major impact on our war with them.<sup>199</sup>

This may be appealing to the target audience of the propaganda magazine. The target audience of ISIS' propaganda directed to the West is mainly young adult males, who are marginalized in society and have a weak a sense of purpose or identity.<sup>200</sup> Giving the readership with the above-mentioned qualities a permission to steal the property and wealth of non-believers could give them a sense of power over the group that is permitted to be abused. The polarization of the world into “us” and “them” may also give a sense of purpose for the otherwise purposeless readership of the propaganda magazines. In this way the propagated message can be effective at reaching its target audience.

In summary, *Rumiyah* presented various alternatives to the initially strict ideology concerning *hijrah*. These alternatives consisted of instructing to engage in fighting wherever you are and endorsing migration to other areas of the Islamic State outside of Iraq and Syria. New aspects within this theme were instructions to steal or destroy non-believers' property. These were presented as ways for the individual to partake in the fighting effort, if *hijrah* was too difficult or not possible. Finally, *Rumiyah* presented performing *hijrah* as a way of receiving forgiveness for one's sins. This theme is analyzed next.

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<sup>196</sup> Rumiyah 11, 38.

<sup>197</sup> The Oxford Dictionary of Islam 2003d.

<sup>198</sup> The Oxford Dictionary of Islam 2003e.

<sup>199</sup> Rumiyah 11, 39.

<sup>200</sup> Gerstel 2017, 2–3.

### 3.7. Hijrah as Atonement for One's Sins

Something that was new in *Rumiyah* was *hijrah*'s relation to the forgiving of sins. An article on the continuation of *hijrah* in the fourth issue of *Rumiyah* added this dimension of benefits to the ideology around *hijrah*. This aspect of *hijrah* on a personal level was mentioned multiple times on one page:

So *hijrah* inevitably ends with forgiveness and Jannah, as long as the muhajir sincerely dedicates his intention to Allah and remains firm in His cause.<sup>201</sup>

Indeed, there is great blessing in *hijrah*. If the muwahhid but knew this, he would sell everything he owns of worldly possessions in order to purchase his salvation and seek the pleasure of Allah.<sup>202</sup>

"Are you not aware that Islam wipes out all previous sins, that *hijrah* wipes out all previous sins, and that hajj wipes out all previous sins?" (Reported by Muslim).<sup>203</sup>

Yes, indeed the Master forgave a man who killed himself due to a *hijrah* done solely for Allah.<sup>204</sup>

These snippets of text reveal a persuasive technique employed by ISIS when it encouraged its propaganda's readers to perform *hijrah*. The technique is a promise of a benefit, which is something that was done in earlier issues in relation to *hijrah* as well. Here, however, the promise is that all earlier sins will be forgiven if a person performs *hijrah* for the cause of Allah. To the reader this may seem like a motivating incentive if they feel they have committed sins they want to be forgiven for in the eyes of Allah. In that case the promised benefit matches the reader's intrinsic motivation, which means that it is something they actually individually desire.<sup>205</sup>

The eighth issue of *Rumiyah* continued on the aspect of *hijrah* and its power to wipe away sins. An article titled *Being Blessed with Health and Tested with Illness* describes the historical story of a man, who made *hijrah*, but became sick and later killed himself. This story comes right after the text established that it is forbidden to kill oneself: "Allah forbade killing oneself when He said, 'And do not kill yourselves. Indeed, Allah is to you ever Merciful' (An-Nisa 29)."<sup>206</sup>

Al-Hakim reported in his *Mustadrak*, from Jabir, that a man from the people of at-Tufayl Ibn 'Amr ad-Dawsi made *hijrah* with at-Tufayl and then became sick. He said, "He became discontent, so he came to a quiver, took an arrow, and cut the veins in his hands and died." At-Tufayl saw him in a dream and said, "What did Allah do with you?" He said, "He forgave me due to my *hijrah* to the Prophet"... So that was a man who didn't intend to kill himself, however his action led to his death, and Allah forgave him due to his *hijrah*, as that is what is apparent from the supplication of the Prophet for him.<sup>207</sup>

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<sup>201</sup> Rumiyah 4, 3.

<sup>202</sup> Rumiyah 4, 3.

<sup>203</sup> Rumiyah 4, 3.

<sup>204</sup> Rumiyah 4, 3.

<sup>205</sup> Bakir 2018, 13.

<sup>206</sup> Rumiyah 8, 31.

<sup>207</sup> Rumiyah 8, 31.

This text shows the attractive side of performing *hijrah*. Making *hijrah* is portrayed as an action that will make Allah forgive sins, even a sin that was earlier described to be strictly forbidden, which is taking one's own life. This kind of a promise could appeal to the readers that carry contrition of certain sins on their conscience. They may have done something harmful to their health, for example smoked cigarettes or used intoxicating substances – both of which are mentioned in the *Rumiyah*-article's description of the sins about harming one's own health.<sup>208</sup> Since smoking and drinking are quite common, receiving forgiveness from these may serve as an incentive to perform *hijrah* to those who are in the target group of ISIS's English-language propaganda magazines.

*Hijrah* was presented as a tool to receive forgiveness for one's sins in *Rumiyah*. In the magazines this was an unprecedented benefit that would result from performing *hijrah*. The two aspects that emerged in this theme were that from committing to making *hijrah* all earlier sins would be forgiven and that even a sin that was condemned by Allah could be forgiven. The latter employed the example of suicide, which was strictly forbidden. These benefits in the hereafter seemed to incentivize into performing *hijrah*.

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<sup>208</sup> *Rumiyah* 8, 31.

## 4. COMPARISON OF *DABIQ* AND *RUMIYAH*

The analysis in the two previous chapters showed that several prominent themes were present in the messaging concerning the ideological term *hijrah*. Eight large themes, which also formed the subtitles in the chapters, were the calls to perform *hijrah*, description of the significance and legitimacy of *hijrah*, promises of benefits resulting from performing *hijrah*, threats to non-compliance with the expected performing of *hijrah*, showcasing of exemplary behavior regarding *hijrah*, role of women in relation to *hijrah*, alternative scenarios and variations of *hijrah*, as well as *hijrah*'s role in atonement for one's sins. Most of the themes were visible in both magazines, but the most obvious difference was revealed in that two of the themes were only present in either of the two magazines. The theme for promises of benefits resulting from *hijrah* was only present in *Dabiq*, while the theme for the atonement of sins due to *hijrah* was only seen in *Rumiyah*. Both of these themes could be seen as presenting benefits to someone, who performs *hijrah*, but since *Rumiyah* lacked the promises of benefits in the temporal world, the two categories were separated to make the distinction clearer. What follows is a closer look at how the messages concerning *hijrah* were similar between the two magazines and how they were different as well as how they changed or developed. The texts categorized into the eight larger themes, identified in the previous chapters, were coded for both magazines and the codes placed in a table (see Appendix 1).

### 4.1. *Similarities in the Propaganda Concerning Hijrah*

Setting the categorized themes side by side revealed that those themes, which appeared in both magazines, had similarities in them. Below, these similarities are compared with each other. This is done by identifying the comparable similarities in the messages presented in the two magazines and placing them side-by-side.

The first of these similarities was the theme on calls presented for performing *hijrah*. While *Dabiq* had more calls, which were clearer and mainly direct, both magazines mentioned that migration to the Islamic State was an individual's choice. The target audience was told that the decision to migrate (or not to migrate) had to be made on the personal level. Even though *hijrah* was presented as an obligation and the readers were urged to perform it, the choice to do it or not was still up to the individual. In *Dabiq* it was stated that "each individual is only responsible for himself"<sup>209</sup> and that the individual "should not look around and base his decision to make *hijrah* and wage *jihad* for the cause of Allah on what other

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<sup>209</sup> *Dabiq* 13, 29.

people are doing.”<sup>210</sup> *Rumiyah* presented the individual choice by stating “everyone who wishes to march forth must exert effort in that regard with sincerity”<sup>211</sup>. These calls seemed to soften the obligatory aspect of *hijrah* that was presented throughout the issues of both magazines. With the incorporation of the idea that an individual has the choice to migrate or not, calls to *hijrah* seemed to try to make the choice of migration into a false dilemma, a technique used in propaganda. The propaganda established that the correct choice in the presented dilemma was to perform *hijrah*. Failing to choose correctly implied an opposition to the whole cause and thus to the worldview of ISIS.<sup>212</sup>

Similarities also occurred in the theme, in which ISIS sought to explain the significance and legitimacy of their view of *hijrah*. These similarities were arguments that explained to the reader the centrality of *hijrah* in the religion of Islam, the unchanging nature of *hijrah*, and that performing *hijrah* is something that defines a true believer. In both magazines religious texts were used to legitimize the view of *hijrah* and the term was linked to apocalyptic prophecies. The prophetic aspect of *hijrah* co-occurred with the presentation of the unchanging nature of the obligation to migrate. In explaining the significance of *hijrah* and showing the legitimacy it has in the worldview that ISIS holds, *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah* exploited the possible unawareness on Islam of their target audience. According to Dylan Gerstel, the target audience of ISIS’s propaganda in the West was youth and young adults often with little understanding about the religion of Islam.<sup>213</sup> This suggests that the molding of the target audience’s understanding of the religion was a key element in the propaganda. Depicting *hijrah* as a central element of Islam and citing religious texts most likely served to distort the understanding of the religion in the readers of the magazines. Vian Bakir et al. would see this sort of information management as deception through distortion; the information is presented in a way that does not present a clear or balanced picture.<sup>214</sup> In the magazines the religion of Islam is described in a misleading manner on purpose in order to back the worldview of ISIS. Parts of the religion and religious texts that concern *hijrah* were emphasized.

Threats for not complying with the expected behavior of performing *hijrah* to the Islamic State were presented in both magazines. Even though threats were more diverse and numerous in *Dabiq* than in *Rumiyah*, both magazines employed the threat of punishment by

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<sup>210</sup> *Dabiq* 13, 29.

<sup>211</sup> *Rumiyah* 10, 41.

<sup>212</sup> *Shabo* 2008, 37.

<sup>213</sup> Gerstel 2017, 2.

<sup>214</sup> Bakir et al. 2018, 12.

Allah, if *hijrah* was not performed. In both magazines Allah's punishment to an individual not complying with the requirement to migrate was placed in the afterlife. It was not told what the punishment would be. Instead it was only stated that a punishment would ensue. In *Rumiyah*, the punishment by Allah was simply implied with the words: "Allah will resurrect them according to their intentions"<sup>215</sup>. The use of threats revealed that ISIS employed fear appeal in its propaganda concerning *hijrah*. This means that the information in the messaging included aspects that threatened the readership. Jowett and O'Donnell argue that for a fear appeal to be effective, an action for averting the threat should also be provided.<sup>216</sup> The action provided for averting the threat of punishment by Allah in *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah* is clear: perform *hijrah*.

Cases of exemplary behavior concerning *hijrah* were a large theme in both *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah*. This theme included two main similarities between the magazines. These were the provision of examples, where the presented individuals turned away from other Islamist groups and joined ISIS as well as the seeking of death or martyrdom through dying in battle. The former seemed to be strategically placed in the propaganda by ISIS in a situation, where the group possibly saw that recruitment could be made from supporters of other Sunni Islamist groups too. The conflict in Syria, for example, consisted of numerous players, some of which were radical Islamist groups as well, like al-Qaeda.<sup>217</sup> It could be possible that ISIS saw the members of such groups as potential recruits, if the worldviews of the groups were seen similar enough to the one ISIS held. The second similarity was a prominent theme within the article series *Among the Believers are Men*, which ran through both of the magazines. The central aspect in most of these articles was the death or martyrdom of the presented individuals. They were presented as having died fighting for Islam and subsequently they were revered as heroes. These stories of martyrs idolized dying in battle and seemed to try to affect the readership so that they would admire such behavior too. *Hijrah* was a crucial aspect in the narratives on the examples' path to martyrdom.

Another big theme in both of the magazines was the explaining of women's role regarding *hijrah*. Similarities within this theme in the magazines could be found in how women were encouraged to support jihadist men and sacrifice their own well-being for the sake of *hijrah*. Women were also promised a good life in the Islamic State in both magazines. Cases of exemplary women were presented in both magazines. These examples seemed to showcase what it was that ISIS expected from its female readership concerning *hijrah*. These

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<sup>215</sup> Rumiyah 6, 14.

<sup>216</sup> Jowett & O'Donnell 2015, 191.

<sup>217</sup> BBC 2017.

similarities in the two magazines' *hijrah*-related messages aimed at women correlate with ISIS's overall portrayal of women. Mah-Rukh Ali noted that many young women in the West were influenced by the idealized image of life in Syria and Iraq conveyed by ISIS. This was supported by social media activity of those women that had already joined ISIS. They depicted idyllic images of good life within the Islamic State in their posts online. In the social media posts strong was also the belief that women would get everything they needed from the Islamic State: a loving husband, children and a nice home.<sup>218</sup>

Finally, similarities were found in the alternative scenarios and variations of *hijrah* that the two magazines presented. A prominent alternative to *hijrah*, which was presented in later issues of *Dabiq* (for example, issues 9, 10 and 13) and early on in *Rumiyah* (issue number 3), was fighting where you are. This instruction to attack or fight the enemies where you are was especially linked with *hijrah*. Otherwise, the magazines contained orders to attack too, but from the perspective of the research question of this thesis, only the orders to fight with a relation to *hijrah* were considered. On a larger scale the theme of variations to *hijrah* showed that the message propagated about migration to the Islamic State varied in both magazines. Variety existed between an unambiguous obligation of every Muslim to migrate to Iraq and Syria and the engagement in fighting wherever one lived. In both magazines the idea of performing *hijrah* to other regions of the Islamic State outside Iraq and Syria was also introduced. This showed that the initially limited destinations of Iraq and Syria were expanded to include areas such as North Africa or East Asia. Shifting or enlarging the regional focus of where ISIS wanted its supporters to migrate could tell of a change in strategy. Before starting to sustain heavy losses after the initial expansive phase, ISIS may have wanted more fighters in other areas in addition to Syria and Iraq in order to spread its influence. Having moved to a diminishing phase due to airstrikes and on-the-ground losses, the aim may have been to move the entire fight somewhere else. In January 2019, Rukmini Callimachi reported that strategically ISIS was heading back to its insurgent roots, employing suicide bombings as tactics. In addition, Callimachi wrote that even though ISIS's territorial control had shrunk to just two villages in Syria, globally ISIS still had large support in regions such as West Africa, Somalia, Yemen and the Philippines.<sup>219</sup>

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<sup>218</sup> Ali 2015, 15.

<sup>219</sup> Callimachi 2019.

## 4.2. Change in the Propagated Message of Hijrah

Analyzing the larger themes side by side revealed differences between *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah* in messages regarding *hijrah*. Below the differences are compared within the larger themes, in which the texts were analyzed in the two previous chapters.

Calls to *hijrah*, were most prominent in *Dabiq* magazine. It consisted of direct calls to migrate. In *Dabiq* the obligatory aspect of *hijrah* was more emphasized than in *Rumiyah*. A feeling of urgency was also conveyed in *Dabiq* by citations of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi where he called on Muslims to rush to their state. These were part of the declaration of the caliphate, which al-Baghdadi himself declared to be the caliph of. At the time of the publication of *Dabiq*-magazine from 2014 to 2016, ISIS was doing well and was still holding control of large territories in Iraq and Syria. They had seized the Iraqi city of Mosul in June 2014.<sup>220</sup> The group was expecting to gain such military prowess and capacity that it could directly take on its enemies, who had always been stronger and better equipped than them. Even the name of the magazine at the time, *Dabiq*, referred to the site of the great apocalyptic battles that would occur before the end of the world.<sup>221</sup> On the other hand, *Rumiyah*'s calls for *hijrah* were not as strong and al-Baghdadi's speeches, with their authoritative power, were not quoted. *Rumiyah* featured indirect calls, such as the description of ISIS's media faction's foreign language team's purpose (to urge Muslims to perform *hijrah*)<sup>222</sup>. The losing of territories and capabilities to wage large-scale, on-the-ground war prompted a shift in ISIS's strategy. It had begun moving towards a war of insurgency and one of encouraging into terror attacks.<sup>223</sup> *Hijrah* was still a prominent theme in *Rumiyah*, but calls to perform it had changed. The rhetoric of an Islamic State in Syria and Iraq and migration to it showed a shift into calling readership of the magazine to migrate to other areas, such as East Asia.<sup>224</sup> The change in geographical focus in the calls to *hijrah* showed that – even when disregarding the general shift in *Rumiyah* into promoting terror attacks – there also occurred a shift in the calling of Muslims to migrate.

The theme of explanations of *hijrah*'s significance and legitimacy in ISIS's ideology showed differences between the two magazines. In *Dabiq*, *hijrah* was portrayed as historically unique, while in *Rumiyah* it was described as geopolitically significant. These takes on the significance of *hijrah* both exaggerated the role of *hijrah*, but the first historically and the

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<sup>220</sup> Chulov, 2014.

<sup>221</sup> Conrad 2018.

<sup>222</sup> *Rumiyah* 8, 42.

<sup>223</sup> Conrad 2018.

<sup>224</sup> *Rumiyah* 10, 37.



second politically. *Dabiq* presented *hijrah* as a central aspect of the Islamic State, which was described to be “a state of *hijrah* and *jihād*”<sup>225</sup>. Other attributes presented in this theme in *Dabiq* were that *hijrah* means abandoning what Allah dislikes and that the destination or direction of *hijrah* is towards the Islamic State, not the opposite. *Rumiyah* on the other hand presented *hijrah* in relation to the enemies of Islam by explaining that even a former enemy could turn into an ally by accepting Islam and performing *hijrah*.<sup>226</sup> In addition, *Rumiyah* also explained that *hijrah* is the solution to the difficulties that Muslims face living in non-Muslim countries. Explaining that *hijrah* is not tourism or the seeking of luxuries also addressed Muslim’s understanding of *hijrah*. *Rumiyah*’s description of *hijrah*’s significance and characteristics seemed to try to clarify the ideological understanding of the term, as did *Dabiq*’s. However, *Rumiyah* seemed to try to make sure the readership did not understand *hijrah* wrong by adhering to different understandings of the term, such as *hijrah* as tourism or pursuit of luxuries. The noting of a possibility of understanding *hijrah* differently showed a propagandistic technique called card stacking. This implies a presentation of alternative views, but in a dismissive way.<sup>227</sup> The differing understandings of *hijrah* were presented so that it is not the correct way of understanding the term.

A big change in the thematic focus in the propaganda concerning *hijrah* in the two magazines was that *Dabiq* featured promises of benefits, which would result in the temporal world from committing to performing *hijrah*. These benefits were short term, such as homes, comfort, finding of abundance and provision of everything needed for living and working in the Islamic State. The benefits in *Dabiq* were also long term, such as receiving glory and honor or getting rewarded by Allah. In *Dabiq*, these promises were prominently focused on benefits the Islamic State could offer. These were short term or immediate benefits like promising homes for the family, offering everything needed for living and working in the Islamic State, and offering help to those, who migrated. Benefits promised for a performer of *hijrah* also included long-term benefits such as honor and glory or getting rewarded by Allah in the afterlife. The ability to promise concrete and incentivizing benefits, like a home for the family, could stem from large territorial control during the times when *Dabiq* was published. The fact that such promises were absent in *Rumiyah* could reflect the lessening ability of ISIS to provide such promises due to the sliding away of territorial control. The promises of benefits for performing *hijrah*, propagated in *Rumiyah* concerned mainly benefits, which did

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<sup>225</sup> *Dabiq* 4, 3.

<sup>226</sup> *Rumiyah* 1, 8.

<sup>227</sup> *Shabo* 2008, 24–27.

not require finances, assets or possessions of this world. The prominent benefit in *Rumiyah* was the atonement for one's sins resulting from performing *hijrah*. This still gave an incentive to migrate, but without commitment by ISIS to ultimately be the one providing the benefit.

Punishment from Allah was a unifying aspect within the theme that presented threats to non-compliance to the expected behavior. However, differences also existed within this theme between the magazines. In *Dabiq*, for not following the expected action regarding *hijrah*, the reader was threatened with getting apostatized, incurring a life of hardship on oneself, incurring losing one's children, and facing the angels of death. Thus, these threats incorporated devastation to one's religion, well-being, family and afterlife. In *Rumiyah*, the threats, which were not seen in *Dabiq*, used a terrorist attack in Istanbul that saw Muslims as casualties as a concretizing example.<sup>228</sup> The threats were that not complying with the obligation of *hijrah* would incur a susceptibility to harm as well as an exemption from ISIS's protection. The use of the Istanbul case as an example to display these threats may have stemmed from the fact that among the casualties were also Muslims. From one angle it could be seen as an effort to legitimize the nightclub attack. From another angle it can be seen as a clever way of using the attack to strengthen the message of the importance for Muslims to be obedient regarding the call to make *hijrah* to the Islamic State.

Cases of exemplary behavior regarding ISIS's view of *hijrah* presented different aspects within the theme as well. *Dabiq* presented stories, where the performing of *hijrah* makes a person a hero, gives purpose to life, and lets you meet jihadist celebrities. In addition, exemplary individuals were presented committing attacks on enemies before making *hijrah*. They were depicted as pioneers of *hijrah* who did not let illness be an excuse not to migrate. As an exception, returning to Europe, in order to attack enemies there after having already made *hijrah*, was presented as exemplary behavior. The presentation of an idolized fighter returning to Europe occurred in the penultimate issue of *Dabiq*.<sup>229</sup> It signaled a change in how *hijrah* was viewed. This is because in earlier issues returning to the West after *hijrah* had been described as a "dangerous major sin"<sup>230</sup>. The ideological change in approach to *hijrah*, which seemed to loosen in strictness over time, continued in the exemplary cases presented in *Rumiyah*. An aspect, that *Rumiyah* presented, included cases, where individuals would be described to receive the reward for *hijrah* simply from having an intention to do it. Other aspects *Rumiyah* presented were the sacrificing of one's well-being for *hijrah*, migrating

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<sup>228</sup> *Rumiyah* 6, 14.

<sup>229</sup> *Dabiq* 14, 7.

<sup>230</sup> *Dabiq* 11, 22.

because of the thirst for the blood of enemies as well as helping or leading others on their path of *hijrah*.

The role of women regarding *hijrah* differed between the two magazines. In *Dabiq*, *hijrah* was presented as a duty for women and women were encouraged to become pioneers of *hijrah* from their own social circles. In other words, they were encouraged to be the first out of their groups of friends to migrate setting an example for others. Women were also pressured to accept polygyny. *Dabiq* did this by arguing that if one accepts Sharia law and commits to making *hijrah*, polygamous marriages are a natural and logical subsequence. In regards to *hijrah*, *Rumiyah* pushed for women to endure violence, remarry when widowed, and raise future jihadists. Regarding the differences in the messages, relating to *hijrah* aimed at women, *Rumiyah* seems to have pushed for a further subordination of women. The inclusion of a theme of arguing for why women should accept maltreatment and endure violence towards them shows this. The fate of widowed women, whose jihadi husbands died, further reduced women into recyclable future-jihadist-raising and baby-making machines. This was showcased by the description of the story of Asma Bint ‘Umayy, who bore children to three different husbands.<sup>231</sup>

The theme of alternative actions regarding *hijrah* also included differences when comparing the two magazines. *Dabiq* presented that, if one died fighting enemies in their own lands, plans to perform *hijrah* sufficed for obtaining martyrdom. The tenth issue of *Dabiq* presented fighting the enemies as a preferred option and the killing of non-believers was labeled obligatory in the fifteenth issue.<sup>232</sup> These signaled a change over time to the approach to *hijrah*, which already began in *Dabiq*. The shift towards a heavier focus on fighting the enemies in their own lands continued in *Rumiyah*. However, *Rumiyah* also presented further aspects in this shift. In addition to encouraging fighting or attacking the enemies as an alternative to performing *hijrah*, *Rumiyah* encouraged the stealing and destroying of non-believers’ property. This was presented as an easier way of waging war on the enemies, effectively lowering the threshold for engagement for those, who could or would not perform *hijrah* and were not brave enough to commit outright attacks. This could signal of a strategic change by ISIS to broaden the scope of war against their enemies at a time, when being selective on the means of waging war may have seemed too ineffective. This may have pushed ISIS to a more allowing take on the concept of *hijrah*, which was initially set as a clear-cut and urgent obligation for every Muslim to migrate to the Islamic State.

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<sup>231</sup> *Rumiyah* 4, 32.

<sup>232</sup> *Dabiq* 10, 64; *Dabiq* 15, 28.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This thesis studied how the propaganda concerning *hijrah*, or migration, to the Islamic State was constructed in ISIS's online magazines *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah*. By comparing the rhetoric surrounding *hijrah*, the aim was to reveal differences and development over time in the propaganda regarding the concept between the two magazines. The research tested the hypothesis that due to its diminishing phase, which emanated from losses in battles and instilled an overall shift in fighting strategy, ISIS changed the propaganda concerning *hijrah* over time. By identifying eight main categories that *hijrah* was propagated in, the research made it possible to compare the propagated messages and track occurring change. The research found that the following eight categories were used to propagate messages on *hijrah* throughout the magazines: (1) calls to *hijrah*, (2) significance and legitimacy of *hijrah*, (3) promises of benefits resulting from *hijrah*, (4) imposing of threats for not performing *hijrah*, (5) cases of exemplary behavior regarding *hijrah*, (6) women's role in the context of *hijrah*, (7) alternatives to and variations of *hijrah*, and (8) *hijrah* as atonement for one's sins. After identifying these categories from the two magazines, the next step was to compare the categories with each other so that changes in the propagated message on *hijrah* could be uncovered. In this step smaller themes were coded from the examples taken up from each of the larger categories in both magazines.

The results showed that propaganda concerning *hijrah* did change – not only between the two magazines but also within them. *Dabiq*-magazine began showing signs of a loosening understanding of the strictness of *hijrah* in the latter half of the fifteen issues of the magazine. The initially strictly set paradigm for the concept of *hijrah* began to bend. *Rumiyah* continued to develop the message on *hijrah* as well. This second magazine presented the intention for performing *hijrah* as sufficient for being rewarded. It also encouraged into fighting wherever one was located and included the aspect of stealing or destroying non-believers' property as a means of partaking in ISIS's efforts against its enemies. Explaining why certain changes regarding *hijrah* took place was challenging. It was difficult to pinpoint any given event to explain a certain change in the propaganda, especially concerning the magazines' take on *hijrah*. However, the overall change in the fortunes of ISIS, from an expansion-oriented phase to one characterized by losses and diminishing control of areas, can be seen to reflect in the way the concept of *hijrah* developed.

This thesis showed that in ISIS's declining situation the larger shift in the group's strategy reflected into the concept of *hijrah*. By testing the hypothesis that ISIS's changing fortunes made the group focus more on promoting terror attacks as their ability to wage war

on the ground diminished over time, this thesis proved that the two magazines developed the ideology around the concept of *hijrah*. The ideology concerning *hijrah* began to broaden and subsequently included aspects of fighting or otherwise inflicting damage to ISIS's enemies. The developments to *hijrah*'s concept began in the latter half of the fifteen issues of *Dabiq*. Readers began to be encouraged to migrate to other regions of the Islamic State outside of Iraq and Syria as well – in some cases even migration back to Europe in order to commit terror attacks there was seen as good behavior. This was in contrast to the propagated ideology of *hijrah* in the beginning, where the direction of migration was only acceptable towards the Islamic State. Both *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah* encouraged the target audience to engage in fighting. Fighting even became an option as good or at times even better than performing *hijrah*. Encouragement to migrate to the Islamic State did not cease throughout the magazines' issues, however. Overall, the concept seemed to incorporate new aspects instead of simply taking on new ones and dismissing others.

ISIS has shown what the effective use of modern technology and propaganda together can achieve. The scale, at which ISIS was able to inspire tens of thousands of foreign fighters to migrate, so that they could join the fight, is a new phenomenon. The defeat of ISIS on the ground, however, does not guarantee it would not happen again, possibly with another violent extremist religious group. In order to be able to counter radicalization and the foreign fighter phenomenon in the future, it is crucial to expand our understanding of how violent extremist groups may employ propaganda to spur people into action. More research is needed to develop countering strategies against the effective propaganda. A future study could, for example, attempt to uncover the reasons why messages on *hijrah* resonated in so many people in the West. If possible, interviewing returned foreign fighters for the effect of propaganda to their decision to leave could give further understanding into the larger topic of this thesis from the propagandee's perspective. A study like this could help the development of countering strategies against the radicalization of groups and individuals on a societal level. More effective countering of violent extremist propaganda and the foreign fighter migration would also reduce the potential security risk posed by returning foreign fighters.

In a possible future scenario, where another violent radical religious group attempts to urge people to join them, leave their homes and become foreign fighters or generally support the cause, it would help to know how religious ideology may be used in propaganda to achieve those effects. This thesis showed that ISIS's use of the term *hijrah* was flexible and was made to fit the purposes of the group in their propaganda. This could be tested as a hypothesis in future studies; how does a violent and radical religious group employ and bend

ideology to propagate its own goals? Understanding the reasons why calls to *hijrah* resonated in the readership of propaganda magazines and supporters of ISIS is a crucial step in countering the foreign fighter phenomenon in the future.

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## APPENDICES

### **Appendix 1: Coding Table for Themes of Hijrah Within the Categories Identified in ISIS's Online Magazines Dabiq and Rumiya**

| Category   | Themes in <i>Dabiq</i>  |                                | Themes in <i>Rumiya</i>   |  |
|--|---|--------------------------------|---|--|
| Calls to <i>hijrah</i>                                     | Direct calls  |                                | Direct calls  | Indirect calls   |
|  | Rush, citing Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, duty/obligation of <i>hijrah</i> , <i>hijrah</i> as an individual choice, inclusion of family level, Syria and Iraq as destinations  |                                | East Asia as a destination, <i>hijrah as an individual choice</i>   | Description of media faction's foreign language team's purpose |
| Significance and legitimacy of <i>hijrah</i>               | Historically unique, central to Islam, use of religious texts for legitimacy, central to Islamic State, unchanging, abandoning what Allah dislikes, prophetic, defines a true believer, destination Islamic State   |                                | Central to Islam, use of religious text for legitimacy, relation to enemies of Islam, defines a true believer, unchanging, internationally significant, not tourism, solution to difficulties in non-Muslim countries, prophetic                            |  |
| Promises of benefits resulting from <i>hijrah</i>          | Immediate or short-term benefits  | Long-term benefits             |   |  |
|  | Homes, provision of requirements for living and working in Islamic State, comfort, abundance  | Glory/honor, reward from Allah |   |  |
| Threats to non-compliance with obligation of <i>hijrah</i> | Getting apostatized, life of hardship, losing one's children, facing "angels of death", punishment from Allah   |                                | Becoming susceptible to harm, exemption from ISIS's protection, punishment from Allah   |  |
| Exemplary behavior in relation to <i>hijrah</i>            | Seeking of martyrdom, becoming a hero, meeting role model jihadists, turning away from other Islamist groups, getting purpose to life, presenting celebrity jihadists, returning to Europe after <i>hijrah</i> , attacking enemies before <i>hijrah</i> , being a pioneer of <i>hijrah</i> , illness is not an excuse |                                | Sacrificing well-being for <i>hijrah</i> , thirsting the blood of enemies, turning away from other Islamist groups, receiving reward for intention of <i>hijrah</i> , seeking of martyrdom, helping others' <i>hijrah</i> , leading others in <i>hijrah</i> |  |

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| Role of women in relation to <i>hijrah</i>      | Supporting jihadist men, sacrificing well-being, <i>hijrah</i> is a duty, examples of good behavior, being a pioneer of <i>hijrah</i> , accepting polygyny, promise of good life in Islamic State | Supporting jihadist men, enduring violence, remarrying when widowed, sacrificing well-being, raise future jihadist children, examples of good behavior, promise of good life in Islamic State |
| Alternatives to <i>hijrah</i>                   | Other regions of Islamic State as destinations, plans of <i>hijrah</i> suffice for martyrdom, fighting where you are, <i>hijrah</i> secondary to fighting, killing non-believers obligatory       | Fighting where you are, other regions of Islamic State as destinations, stealing non-believers' property, destroying non-believers' property  |
| Atonement for sins resulting from <i>hijrah</i> |   | All earlier sins forgiven, suicide forgiven   |